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ABSTRACT

This document is comprised of the 1999 issues (issues 2 and 3 are combined) of a newsletter of the Harvard Family Research Project, designed to share new ideas and experiences in evaluating systems reform and comprehensive child and family services. The first issue focuses on the evaluation of youth programs and includes the following articles: (1) "Reflections on Evaluating Strength-Based Approaches to Youth Development"; (2) "Youth Empowerment Evaluation"; (3) "The Juvenile Justice Evaluation Project"; (4) "Interview with Karen Pittman," regarding challenges to evaluating youth development programs, issues related to promoting policy changes, and contribution of other countries' experiences to youth development programming in the United States; (5) "Building Local Capacity for Evaluation: The Michigan Abstinence Partnership Evaluation"; and (6) "New Strategies in Foundation Grantmaking for Children and Youth." The second issue includes results of a reader survey, with the remaining articles focusing on methodological topics, particularly those involving complex initiatives or problems: (1) "Simplifying Complex Initiative Evaluation"; (2) "At What Price? Benefit-Cost Analysis and Cost-Effectiveness Analysis in Program Evaluation"; (3) "Evaluating Collaboratives: Challenges and Practice"; (4) "Interview with Michael Scriven," focusing on the challenges facing the evaluation field, evaluation as a distinct discipline, and links between evaluation and practice; (5) "Evaluating the National Replication of a Prevention Program for Youth and Their Families: Middle School 'Families and Schools Together'"; (6) "Cooperative Extension's Capacity To Support Programs for Children, Youth, and Families at Risk: The Organizational Change Survey"; (7) "Community-Based Research: Research for Action"; (8) "'The Evaluation Exchange' Readers' Survey"; and (9) "Quality of Life: A Framework for Examining the Impact of Welfare Reform." Each issue includes information on training opportunities and evaluation resources. (KB)

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HARVARD FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT

THE EVALUATION EXCHANGE:

Emerging Strategies in Evaluating Child and Family Services

Volume V, Number 1 1999 — Free Quarterly Newsletter

From the Director's Desk

Heather B. Weiss
Director, HFRP

The International Youth Foundation points out that by the year 2000, roughly one-half of the world's population will be under the age of 25. In the United States, approximately one-quarter of the population is expected to be under 18 by 2000. These statistics point to the urgency of supporting positive youth development while also addressing the growing number of challenges facing young people today.

We have devoted this issue of *The Evaluation Exchange* to the evaluation of youth programs. In our Theory and Practice section, Dale Blyth of the Center for 4-H Youth Development and Professor at the University of Minnesota Extension Service, offers his reflections on the issues related to evaluating strength-based approaches to youth development. In our Promising Practices section, we build on a theme that we have presented in past issues — youth participation in evaluation. Kristen Zimmerman and Nancy Erbstein of Community LORE write about their approach, Youth Empowerment Evaluation. Revery Barnes and Kaira Espinoza of Rising Youth for Social Equity write about their experience using youth empowerment evaluation in an evaluation of a juvenile justice program. In our Questions and Answers section, we speak with Karen Pittman of the International Youth Foundation about evaluating youth development programs and about lessons learned from the international community. In our Evaluations to Watch section, Stacy Meade of the Michigan Public Health Institute discusses the use of an empowerment evaluation approach to increase local capacity for evaluation. Elena Lopez and I discuss the results of a recent study we conducted on foundation grantmaking for children and youth in our Spotlight section. Our New and Noteworthy and Electronic Mailbox sections identify useful print and electronic sources related to evaluation of youth programs. Finally, our Beyond Basic Training section highlights some forthcoming evaluation conferences. These articles bring together a variety of perspectives and help us to move ahead in thinking about how to improve results for children and youth. We would like to hear from readers about their work in this area for future issues of this newsletter.

In closing, I would like to thank all who completed our reader survey. We are now compiling the results and will share these in our next issue. Please continue to share your suggestions and comments with us through our e-mail (hfrp_gsc@harvard.edu) or our Web site (http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~hfrp). Thank you. ◆

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Reflections on Evaluating Strength-Based Approaches to Youth Development

In recent years there has been an increasing call to use strength- rather than deficit-based approaches to many issues — but especially those around youth and community development. In part, these reflect efforts to focus work on developing that which is desired rather than preventing or treating that which is undesired — the deficit. Such approaches have great appeal, especially for the audience or client, because they do not emphasize what is wrong but what is helpful and can be built. How do the differences in these two approaches impact the ways in which one does evaluation?

When I was the Director of Research and Evaluation at Search Institute, known for creating the 40 developmental assets that youth need to succeed and the Healthy Communities, Healthy Youth Initiative, my colleagues and I grappled with this question regularly. There are three key aspects to this question: the impact of "moving upstream" in the causal flow, the nature of the populations evaluated, and the perceptions of funders and policymakers.

Impact of Moving Upstream

In large part, strength-based approaches seek to use what we know about the factors that predict deficits (both protective factors and risk factors), often combined with other desirable characteristics of healthy development, to create outcomes that are earlier in the causal flow than the deficit. (e.g., establishing that a caring relationship between youth and adult exists, increasing the constructive use of time.) Such approaches are based on solid research, but they switch, in fundamental ways, the dependent (outcome) variable from the single deficit of concern to the multiple strengths, or assets, that are needed for youth to succeed. For example, they switch from just the level of drug use to the number and nature of positive factors operating in the youth's life — such as the total number of developmental assets. Furthermore, most strength-based approaches look for assets that have an impact on multiple deficits (e.g., caring connections to positive adults or peers) and which, when combined, have cumulative effects (i.e., the more assets that are built, the greater the likelihood of thriving and reduced risk behaviors). There are three major implications for evaluation of moving upstream in the causal flow.

First, asset approaches recognize that most programs are not, by themselves (given low intensity and a limited time period), going to dramatically alter deficit outcomes. Instead they focus on creating the assets that should, based on theory and logic, reduce those longer-range outcomes. Like positive youth developments, deficits are, to paraphrase Karen Pittman, the result of the accumulation of the everyday people, places, and possibilities that youth experience. For the evaluator, this means that asset outcomes are often closer to interventions and more appropriate for many programs — a desirable feature. However, it also means that there is a dramatic shift from a singular, highly valued, often behavioral outcome to multiple, less recognized variables — variables that by themselves may not be very important to stakeholders.Second, while the measurement of deficits is not simple, they are often widely understood concepts with clear meaning and value. Assets are less well understood, less often measured carefully, and frequently confused with program outputs as opposed to outcomes. For example, youth who are engaged in constructive time use and play meaningful roles can be said to possess an important asset. Are programs that simply count their participation counting an output or the asset in all its richness? Furthermore, since it is the accumulation of assets, rather than particular assets, that has the greatest developmental value (as well as prevention value), evaluators need to create a mathematics of assets that captures this fact — often a difficult task.

> We know relatively little about multiple combinations and interactions among assets, but it is such factors that may lead to the effective long-term development or prevention of more commonly understood deficit or thriving outcomes.

Third, moving upstream in the causal flow means that one never knows if the ultimate goal was reached since the absence of something is harder to document than its presence. This dilemma has concerned prevention research for years and is not very different in asset evaluations except that one focuses on measuring the assets in and of themselves. If stakeholders' only concerns are deficits that cost them funds or specific positive behaviors such as school achievement, the linkage of assets to these behaviors must be strong and clear — and sometimes empirical. In most youth development models, the linkage is strong but neither clear nor singular, as noted above.

Impact of Who Is Evaluated

Most asset- or strength-based approaches tend to define their target audiences much more broadly and holistically than deficit-based ones. For example, all youth need assets, not just those at risk.

While asset proponents believe that assets can and do make a difference in the lives of those at risk, these proponents are less likely to encourage programs that focus just on such youth. This means that evaluators, particularly of community-based initiatives, are often put in the position of evaluating not just at-risk youth but all program youth, or even all youth in a community. Demonstrating such impacts, let alone actually having such impact, is quite hard but can be a necessary component of some strength-based approaches. For example, using an asset-based approach to the development of all youth in a community makes sense since youth in a community affect one another's development. Evaluators should, when feasible, demonstrate the power of additional assets for different groups.

Another factor is that the number of assets needed to make a significant impact on longer-term outcomes may be differentially higher or lower for some youth. That is, since it is the cumulative number of assets and the health of the developmental contexts that matter in determining long-term outcomes, youth who live in higher risk environments may not be equally protected by the same level of assets as youth who live in a healthier environment. In contrast, it may also be the case that youth who experience a relative lack of assets may be greatly impacted by the addition of any new strengths. We know relatively little about these multiple combinations and interactions among assets, but it is just such factors that may lead to the effective long-term development or prevention of more commonly understood deficit or thriving outcomes. This type of combination effect complicates the work of an evaluator significantly. It also, however, better reflects the reality of development.

Impact of Stakeholder Perceptions

One of the main difficulties evaluators may have in evaluating asset-based approaches is getting stakeholders to agree that more assets, or the presence of particular assets, is a justifiable end in and of itself. Especially where public funds or scarce charitable funds are involved, stakeholders often want to know that programs impact the outcomes that matter most. Since assets are not magic pills that, once built, absolutely affect given deficits or thriving behaviors, it is important but difficult to build clear, empirical linkages between assets and deficits. A potential danger, which evaluators ought to screen for in evaluating strength-based efforts, is that different people hold incompatible views of the program — some strength based, some deficit based, and some a mix of both. The change from known evils to strengths not commonly agreed upon can make evaluation findings, even when positive, less convincing to some. Programs may have a harder time justifying strengths as ends in and of themselves. For example, is a youth better off if he has numerous strengths but still commits a crime or uses drugs? For many leaders, for whom strengths or assets were an integral part of their developmental contexts and everyday lives, the need to use public dollars to build them, or even talk about them may seem unjustified. This separation of costs and investments is critical to evaluating strength-based approaches.

In conclusion, there is much to recommend a variety of the strength- or asset-based approaches that are being used increasingly in community and youth development efforts. Evaluating these approaches requires understanding the approaches and the support they have from previous empirical work, building a chain of logic between what is built and what stakeholders value, and moving to a more complex, cumulative, and often more probabilistic model of causality. I, for one, believe that these difficulties are worth the changes in attitude, energy, involvement, and enhanced contextual reality that they bring with them. Finally, because such approaches are newer, they are less likely to meet a criterion of "proven" effectiveness. Those who use such generally sound criteria must be cautious that they do not throw out promising strength-based approaches that have simply not yet had the time to show they can work effectively. ◇

Dale A. Blyth
Director, Center for 4-H Youth Development and
Professor, University of Minnesota Extension Service

ANNOUNCING: RESULTS-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY PUBLICATIONS FROM HFRP

Results-Based Accountability Case Studies

New evidence from recent studies by HFRP shows that RBA can be a powerful tool to initiate and enhance systems of continuous improvement and learning. These case studies describe RBA efforts in eight states: Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, and Vermont. Each case study identifies the process of designing and implementing RBA systems. Every report includes a description of state and local RBA efforts, their history, the development process, the uses of the RBA systems, and the lessons learned. The unique experiences of the eight states in the studies can provide valuable insights to those responsible for RBA efforts elsewhere in the nation.

Aiming for Accountability: Lessons Learned from Eight States

This report highlights some of the important lessons in designing and developing RBA based on the insights gained from the studies of eight states. Included is information about how these states have overcome some of the challenges in developing effective RBA systems, and what the characteristics of promising RBA efforts are. The executive summary of this report is a new addition to our collection of *Reaching Results Briefs*, and discusses the potential and limitations of RBA systems based on HFRP's eight case studies.

Each of the state reports is $5.00 plus shipping and handling, and *Lessons Learned from Eight States* is $7.00 plus shipping and handling. A special discount is available if ordering all eight of the state reports or all nine in the series. To obtain these publications, please contact the HFRP publications department at (617) 496-4304 or look at our Web site for an order form. You may also e-mail your order: hfrp_gse@harvard.edu

Youth Empowerment Evaluation

Democratic societies depend on the representation and participation of their members. Yet few organizations truly include the voices of stakeholders — particularly those of youth — in decision making and evaluation. The goals of Youth Empowerment Evaluation (YEE) are to increase youth voice in policies, programs, and organizations intended to serve them, and to enhance the ability of youth-serving organizations to effectively address and engage young people.

For nine years, Community LORE has promoted and supported youth participation in research, evaluation, and planning. Through our YEE initiative, we work as coaches, facilitators, and trainers (rather than evaluators) to develop the capacity of youth *and* adults to conduct youth-led evaluations. Young people gain the experience, skills, and concepts necessary to evaluate youth-serving organizations and to design organizational feedback loops that nurture learning, planning, and change. Adults learn to work in partnership with youth.

We work on four levels:

- training youth within organizations to design and conduct evaluations;
- developing curriculum for adult facilitators and youth leaders on planning and facilitating youth evaluation processes;
- coaching organization leaders and adult evaluators on working with youth as full partners and integrating youth leadership and evaluation into organizational structures and cultures;
- facilitating networking between organizations undertaking YEE.

Two recent Community LORE projects include the Jamestown Community Center evaluation and the Juvenile Justice Evaluation Project (JJE; see next article). The Jamestown project engaged participants in the Center's strategic planning process. We trained middle school aged youth to interview program participants and non-participants regarding their perceptions of the Center and their future program needs. For the JJE Project, Community LORE trained 12 youth to assess the impact of reforms on San Francisco's juvenile justice system. We collaborated with Rising Youth for Social Equity, Delancy Street Foundation, Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth, and the Center for the Study of Social Change (University of California, Berkeley).

The following were critical to engaging and supporting youth evaluators:

- ***Collaboration.*** We planned the projects with host organizations in order to adapt the process to the context;
- ***Mentoring.*** Adults co-facilitated projects with youth staff to build their capacity to organize evaluation processes;
- ***Youth Development Process.*** We designed the evaluations as educational processes by using a series of fun, skill-building activities;
- ***Intensive Skill and Team Building.*** We organized retreats to build important skills and a strong team;
- ***Compensation.*** We paid youth for their work;
- ***Institutional Accountability.*** We worked with adults to help them incorporate and respond to the findings of youth evaluators.

YEE is a powerful process. Following are changes that these organizations initiated as a result of youth evaluations:

- ***Innovative new programs.*** Based on youth evaluator findings, Jamestown expanded its programming to serve middle school youth with arts, community organizing, and educational activities;
- ***Restructuring programs to better serve and engage youth.*** Based on youth evaluator feedback, Delancey Street Foundation restructured its assessment and referral center for youth who have been arrested;
- ***Increased youth voice in programs and policy.*** The evaluation team's decision to survey non-participating youth enabled Jamestown to reach a broader youth constituency. The JJE Project enabled youth to evaluate and design alternatives to incarceration. This will serve as a model for similar programs nationwide;
- ***Systematic transformation.*** Youth now participate in all program development at Jamestown. This commitment is backed up with substantial training and support.

YEE promotes the systemic transformation of youth service organizations into institutions which value and fully utilize youth leadership and which address the genuine needs of youth, their families, and the broader community.

Community LORE's YEE initiative develops the capacity of youth-serving organizations to engage youth in evaluation through coaching, curricula, training, and network development. ◆

Kristen Zimmerman
Co-Director

Nancy Erbstein
Co-Director
Community LORE

For more information, contact: Community LORE, 2017 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94110. Tel: (415) 621-1402. comlore@igc.org. *Community LORE is supported by the S.H. Cowell Foundation, the Grousebeck Family Fund, the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, the Walter S. Johnson Foundation, and the San Francisco Foundation. Rising Youth for Social Equity and the JJE Project are supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Luke B. Hancock Foundation.*

The Juvenile Justice Evaluation Project

In 1997, Delancy Street Foundation developed a comprehensive action plan to reform San Francisco's juvenile justice system. In response, Rising Youth for Social Equity (RYSE), a youth-run organization, wrote a policy recommendation advocating for youth participation in developing and evaluting the plan's programs. RYSE staff served as the youth evaluation team on this project.

One weakness of many programs designed for young people is that youth themselves are rarely involved in project creation and implementation. While projects often use the language of partnership, collaboration, and ownership, such rhetoric often masks unequal power relationships. Participation by young people is generally limited to single events, after which they become the subjects of interventions planned, implemented, and evaluated by others. Adults, particularly those working within institutions such as schools and law enforcement, are often unaware of the ways in which power shapes their relationships with young people. In contrast, young people are often acutely aware of their own powerlessness.

The goal of our project was to include youth voice in the restructuring of San Francisco's juvenile justice system. We saw this as an opportunity for adults to learn what youth thought about the issues in our communities and lives. We knew we had valuable information to share, and this was our chance to be taken seriously.

We went through a one-year process to design and conduct our evaluation. First, we had to gather youth to form the Youth Evaluation Team. Twelve youth evaluators were selected by a youth-led hiring committee to carry out these important tasks. Those of us chosen to be evaluators went through training, discussions, and meetings with supportive adult mentors to learn the necessary skills to organize our project. Creating the survey, testing it, and collecting data were probably the most time consuming tasks. We created a database, and then professors at the University of California at Berkeley transferred our data into statistical software (SPSS). We then analyzed the results, researched background information, and put together our report.

Our final step will be to present this information to the Delancy Street Foundation. We will also distribute our report to people interested in making this society more youth friendly. Ultimately, we will let policymakers know what youth are concerned about so they will make more informed decisions that truly fulfill our needs. ◆

Revery Barnes
Director

Kaira Espinoza
Community Building Director
Rising Youth for Social Equity

RESOURCES

Publication:

Hart, Roger. (1997). *Children's participation: The theory and practice of involving young citizens in community development and environmental care.* New York: Earthscan.

Organizations:

Center for Young Women's Development
965 Mission Street, Suite 450
San Francisco, CA 94103
Tel: (415) 487-8662
The Center for Young Women's Development is an organization by and for young women involved in the street economy. The Center uses evaluation as an internal tool and as a tool for monitoring services for young women in San Francisco.

Center for Youth Development
Youth Mapping Project
1825 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20009
Tel: (202) 884-8000
The Center for Youth Development provides training and facilitation in community mapping.

Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth
Youth Making a Change (YMAC)
459 Vienna Street
San Francisco, CA 94112
Tel: (415) 239-0161
The Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth is a youth advocacy organization that uses evaluation as an advocacy tool for youth issues in San Francisco.

Community LORE
2017 Mission Street, Suite 302
San Francisco, CA 94110
Tel: (415) 621-1402
Community LORE provides Youth Empowerment Evaluation curricula, training, and coaching to youth-serving organizations and schools. It has published a Youth Empowerment Evaluation curriculum guide for youth leaders and adult educators. It also publishes a newsletter with articles, activities, and resources.

Community Network for Youth Development
657 Mission Street, Suite 410
San Francisco, CA 94105
Tel: (415) 495-0622
This organization provides training, coaching, and network development around youth development.

Girls Best Friend Foundation
900 North Franklin, Suite 608
Chicago, IL 60610
Tel: (312) 266-2842
Girls Best Friend Foundation publishes "Mapping a Path to Evaluation," an evaluation guide for staff in organizations that work with girls.

Rising Youth for Social Equity
2068 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA 94110
Tel: (415) 863-1100
Rising Youth for Social Equity is a youth-run organization that provides training in youth leadership, popular education, and youth involvement in reforming juvenile justice systems.

St. John's Educational Thresholds Center
3040 - 16th Street
San Francisco, CA 94013
Tel: (415) 864-5205
St. John's Educational Thresholds Center has published a workbook for elementary and middle school youth in evaluation.

Interview with Karen Pittman

We asked Karen Pittman, Senior Vice President of the International Youth Foundation, to speak with us about what some of the challenges are to evaluating youth development programs, what issues arise when trying to promote policy changes and scale-up, and what other countries' experiences might bring to youth development programming in the United States.

(1) What are some of the challenges to evaluating youth development programs?

One of the primary challenges for the youth development field is the definition of outcomes, particularly intermediate ones. Many programs are not able to achieve larger outcomes such as reduced teen pregnancy, reduced violence, and increased literacy. Yet funding tends to be problem or outcome-focused, and there is pressure from funders for programs to overcommit. You need to find intermediate and proximate outcomes that are positive, achievable, and also understandable and/or seen as important by parents, policymakers, and others. Fortunately, good work has been done in identifying and building basic competencies in youth. These competencies translate into intermediate skills that help young people to navigate (work in diverse settings), socialize, and learn. If we see these intermediate outcomes now, then down the road, we should be able to point to achievement of larger outcomes.

The other primary challenge is defining what the "it" of programs is. Much of the research says, at a basic level, that what these programs deliver is relationships. But how do you define that? The Fund for the City of New York, Youth Development Project, is trying to answer this. It brought together about a dozen seasoned youth organizations to look at the research base on inputs and outputs and actually operationalize it. They developed three booklets around this [see *New & Noteworthy* section for information].

There are also challenges around comparison or control groups. In a healthy community, youth are often in more than one program or organization. This is how it should be. But you have a hard time bringing traditional evaluation methods such as comparison and control groups to this. It is difficult to find young people who receive "no services" in the true sense of the word. So the comparison, at the organizational level, is really a comparison of a known organization's services and activities against those of unknown organizations. This is why many large organizations (e.g., Girls Inc.) revert to evaluating the impact of a specific program within their organization (using their own members as a control group) rather than try to get a sense of the value of the overall experience.

(2) What elements might a "good" evaluation of youth development programs include?

Good evaluations of youth development programs should include several features. They should employ a participatory approach, including youth in the evaluation and working closely with the director and staff to understand their theory of change and to find out how the outcomes connect in a concrete way to what they are doing. Evaluators should also get a sense from staff as to where else people are getting services. Depending on the program, evaluators also need to pay careful attention to "doses" and services. Young people come in and out and can get very different services. Good evaluations also try to unbundle outputs and outcomes as much as possible. And, as I just mentioned, it is important to get as much information as possible about the other programs, organizations, and resources available in participants' lives.

(3) What are some of the challenges/lessons to translating research findings about successful youth programming into policy changes?

One of the problems is that there is not much research about what works — the number of unevaluated programs far outweighs the number evaluated. We are moving in uncharted territory.

Even where there is evaluation research, there are traditionally a few problems. First, there is the "black box" problem. Even when you have some fairly robust outcomes, you often aren't sure how you got them. Youth programming is complex — was it the field trips, the relationships, the youth workers that worked? So you are left saying "adopt the whole package." This is one of the lessons from YouthBuild — you have to implement all the components to get the outcomes. But, as YouthBuild learned, it is very hard to get people to do the whole thing because they want to take it apart. Then you can have quality problems.

The second problem is the outcomes themselves. One of the ways to effect policy change is to say very clearly "if you do this, this changes." Unfortunately, we do not have those rigorous increases or reductions or outcomes that have a lot of policy currency. We should also make a distinction, although an artificial one, between place-based programs and curricula. Place-based programs are more complex — the outcomes you get from those are tricky to translate into policy. We have not done a good job of translating lessons learned into our public institutions. Good evaluation also requires up-front thinking about replication and scale issues. Typically, this means serving more kids or having the program taken over into the school. Unfortunately, integration of youth programs into the school day and curricula is not happening. I think that, in some ways, this is because evaluations have not thought about what needs to be seen to change policy.

Two broad types of evidence are needed. The first centers around the question of effectiveness. Does the program produce results? In particular, does it produce results that have currency with the public institution being targeted for uptake? If schools are expected to pick up programs, we have to demonstrate

links in school attendance, academic progress, classroom disruption, etc. If juvenile justice or public health dollars are to be reallocated, we have to demonstrate links to youth problems or to the intermediate outcomes that the public and policymakers link to youth problems. Youth development purists have strong negative reactions to these suggestions. But in the end, demonstrating improvements in civic awareness or leadership skills is nice but insufficient if no one cares. To the extent that the target institutional home is known, evaluation outcomes should be developed with this organization in mind.

The second type speaks to scale. Can the program be replicated or expanded? Again, if it is being institutionalized, could teachers do it? Are they willing? Are they proficient? Do they produce the same results as community-based workers? Could volunteers do it? Could it be picked up by organizations other than the one that created it? Is it affordable? Is there an infrastructure that could take it on to move it out to significantly more young people? To the extent that the program has been delivered in different settings, to different populations, by different actors, these should be seen as pretests of robustness. They should be examined, not washed over.

(4) What are some of the challenges/lessons in expanding successful programs? Are there some examples where this has been successfully done?

The "black box" problem also exists when thinking about expansion. It is hard to say which program dimensions are critical and which are "nice." It is very hard in doing an expansion or replication to be sure that you have the right components. It is also important to distinguish between going to scale in a place and nationwide. A lot of programs have gone to scale nationally, but have not done so where they live. This is an important point. National programs replicate by picking the strongest possible candidates for local implementation. Locally, any program going to scale will quickly run through its top picks and be forced to rely on organizations that may not have the capacity or experience needed to deliver the program. Technical assistance, training, and good models and principles become very important. Handbooks don't do it.

The Beacon Schools in New York City offer one of the best examples we have of going to scale in a place. They addressed the local capacity issue directly by building a very robust and aggressive technical assistance network for Beacons implementers. The results, I think, have been impressive. There is variation among the sites, but there is a bottom line of quality that is often not seen when over 70 organizations in one place are implementing a program idea.

The Beacons also offer a very good example of how to define outcomes. They have been very conservative in terms of what they have promised in terms of outcomes. They were careful not to commit to reducing crime rates and drug abuse rates. The Beacons were built around a youth rights issue — young people in every neighborhood need to have places to go, people to talk to, things to do. The Beacons implementers knew if they opened centers, kids would use them. They have documented this hypothesis well. In moving quickly, Beacons implementers and technical assistance providers did not hold delivery of any service hostage to quality — i.e., they did not let the perfect become the enemy of the good. However, they have worked very hard to bring best practice knowledge into the network.

(5) *Are there experiences/lessons of youth programming from other countries that might inform work in the U.S.?*

The main thing I have learned from working in other countries is that they tend to first think sustainability, then scale, then evaluation for effectiveness. It is not an anti-evaluation bias; it is just that they do not typically think "let's pilot something for ten years and really, really get it right and then take it to scale." What other countries see as most important when dealing with youth issues, locally or nationally, is that something is there for young people. In many instances, there is nothing there, and to think about piloting something for 50 kids until they get it right seems almost unconscionable. They take the best of what they know and work to bring it quickly to as many kids as possible in a sustainable way. Then they come back and improve the quality. What many in other countries assume is that quality is "fixable" and it is most important to get the system in place.

This is what the Beacons did. There was no pilot that had a major evaluation on which the next batch was hinged. In the first year, there were 9, then 27, and now 89. This was very much, "we're going to get stuff out to as many kids as possible and our benchmark will be doubling and redoubling each year until we have one in each neighborhood." Along the way, through a good public and private partnership, and investment in technical assistance and training, they have been working on quality.

The difference between programming here and programming elsewhere thus appears in some basic assumptions. In the United States, once we demonstrate the results of something, we face the issue of where the money for it comes from. In other countries, they figure out what they can do with what they have and work very quickly with communities to think about what to do and then get it implemented. The idea that you build it, pilot it, demonstrate that it works, and then someone will come along with the money, is a western, if not a uniquely American, view.

The other lesson is that there is much more of a balance in other countries between process and outcome evaluation. In this country, we assume that with evaluation we want to see individual-level changes. Other countries are often much more content to look at and approach evaluation as a look at the process, and they seek community-level changes. It isn't a methodology sophistication issue. It is really that those in other countries do not necessarily need or want to know that 26 percent of kids in a given program increased their test scores. They want to know that a reasonable number of kids are in the program and that the community is engaged and behind it. They want to know that those kids who have left the program are doing something in the community. They would not be very happy if the young person whose test scores increased left the community. In this process, they look for elements of scale and sustainability. ◇

Karen Horsch
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HFRP

Beyond Basic Training

Upcoming Evaluation Conferences

Australasian Evaluation Society
"Evaluation — Challenging Boundaries"
October 4-8, 1999
Perth, Western Australia
Contact:
Keynote Conferences
PO Box 1126
West Leederville , Western Australia 6901
Tel: (+618) 9382-3799
http://www.ca.com.au/~keynote/conf_pge/cnf1eval.html

This conference will encourage delegates to explore the various boundaries that exist in the field of evaluation including cultural boundaries, theoretical boundaries, sectoral boundaries, and organizational boundaries. The main themes include: challenges in evaluation practice, evaluation – serving the public interest, the role of evaluation in challenging social issues, evaluation of intersectoral programs, and internal and external evaluation.

American Evaluation Association
"The Territory Ahead — Foundations and Frontiers"
November 3-6, 1999
Orlando, FL
Contact:
AEA Conference Committee
EdPA 330 Wulling Hall
86 Pleasant St. SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455
Tel: (651) 503-6588
http://www.kistcon.com/aea

Workshops and discussions will examine the gains that have been made in evaluation over the past decades; clarify the unanswered questions that face the field; and build some alternative scenarios about the future of evaluation. ◆

Evaluations to Watch

Building Local Capacity for Evaluation: The Michigan Abstinence Partnership Evaluation

In recent years, evaluation has come to play an increasingly important role in enabling communities to promote and sustain change. Various methods have been used to assist communities in this endeavor, most notably, the empowerment model of evaluation. Ultimately, this model assists communities in evaluating themselves in a constant interchange between program planning and evaluation. For the last five years, the Michigan Abstinence Partnership (MAP) Evaluation Project has utilized an empowerment evaluation approach to increase capacity for evaluation for community coalitions throughout Michigan. This article discusses the evaluation design and provides a glimpse at some of the lessons learned from implementing this model.

Background

MAP is a statewide, public health initiative based on the belief that teaching abstinence to children aged nine to fourteen can help to promote positive health behaviors and reduce risk-taking behaviors later in life. The impetus for the development of MAP came from the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) in 1993.

Formation of MAP stressed recruitment of a broad base of representatives in the community. Members of MAP include public health officials, educators, medical and health care providers, the religious community, parents, community leaders, child advocates ranging from Planned Parenthood to Michigan Right to Life, and businesses throughout the state.

Community coalitions direct and facilitate MAP programming at the local level. They are located in both rural and urban settings. Each community is encouraged to tailor programming to meet the individual needs of its population.

Evaluation Design

MAP stresses both statewide and local community-level evaluations. At the local level, community coalitions develop Community Action Plans that incorporate the evaluation of activities on three levels.

- First, process evaluation is used to examine how program activities were implemented and how they can be improved in the future.
- Second, the short-term impact on participants' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior is measured.
- Third, the long-term outcomes of program activities will be determined through a time-series analysis of community indicators.

The MDCH and the Michigan Public Health Institute, a non-profit research organization, joined efforts to devise a plan to provide evaluation support to local community coalitions. The primary goal of this project is to increase each community's capacity for evaluation while producing measurable outcomes for program activities. To accomplish this goal, an empowerment evaluation model was selected with a view toward coalition self-sufficiency. The project provides technical assistance in evaluation to community coalitions through workshops, individual site visits, regional technical assistance meetings, evaluation resource materials, and regular contact via fax and phone. Technical assistance to community coalition staff is provided in the following areas:

- evaluation planning, including the development of evaluation designs;
- developing goals and objectives;
- determining outcomes and outcome measures;

- developing quantitative and qualitative evaluation instrumentation;
- evaluation implementation, including data collection and analysis; and
- reporting and utilizing evaluation results.

Lessons Learned to Increase Community Capacity for Evaluation

Throughout the five-year Evaluation Project, several lessons learned have emerged from the activities of the project:

- ***Evaluation technical assistance must be tailored to the distinct cultural and political contexts of each community coalition.*** Each community exists in unique cultural surroundings. The technical assistance and evaluation needs of a Native American tribal school, for example, are very different from those of an urban teen center. The project staff must also be sensitive to politics that exist within each community. Sensitivity to these factors contributes to the building and maintenance of trusting working relationships.
- ***Communities must be met where they are.*** This is true both figuratively and geographically. Communities exist across a continuum of capacities and resources. Technical assistance must be tailored to meet individual needs. The empowerment evaluation model allows the evaluation to adapt on an individual level to the needs and expectations of the community. It is also important to consider where communities are geographically. Travel to each coalition site is invaluable because site visits allow the evaluation staff to witness firsthand the work surroundings, staff dynamics, and program implementation.
- ***Networking with other community coalitions is important.*** As the Partnership has evolved, the communities have gained new insights and ideas from their colleagues around the state. Networking has emerged as an important theme in the evaluation. At trainings and workshops, adequate time is scheduled into the day to insure an opportunity for discussion and sharing.

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SPOTLIGHT

New Strategies in Foundation Grantmaking for Children and Youth

In 1998 the W.K. Kellogg Foundation commissioned the Harvard Family Research Project to examine trends in foundation grantmaking for children and youth. The Foundation wanted to use the information for its own grantmaking and to share the results with others in the philanthropic community. Nineteen foundations participated in this survey, which consisted of a documentary review, a questionnaire, and interviews with 23 senior officers. The foundations included most of the largest and wealthiest, and those whose grantmaking focused heavily on children and youth. Summarized below are the patterns of grantmaking for youth, the trends in grantmaking strategies, and the uses of evaluation among the foundations surveyed.

Patterns of Grantmaking for Youth

Most surveyed foundations have stable commitments to youth development. Of 11 foundations that keep data by age categories, 6 provide a quarter or more of their funds to youth ages 14-20. The bulk of foundation funds for children and youth are largely allocated to education, youth development, and school-to-work initiatives.

Grantmaking that serves youth tends to be fragmented among different program areas—education, community development, health, and so on. Foundation officers, however, increasingly view youth development as a bridge to link these areas. The connection between education and youth development, for example, supports a range of school-linked service models and partnerships between schools and youth-serving community organizations. Other cross-cutting areas are youth and the arts, youth and community development, and the connection between domestic and international youth development.

Foundations adopt the principles of positive youth development, which emphasize human assets and participation in decision making. They support community foundations to involve youth in community grantmaking and youth-initiated efforts in leadership development and community improvement.

Foundation officers interviewed agree that the youth development field needs a grantmaking strategy that focuses on capacity building, including training, leadership, and support for national intermediaries. Part of this effort consists of expanding the knowledge base through research on what promotes positive youth development and program evaluation, in order to identify and disseminate best practices.

Recognizing that the problems of youth are interconnected and require comprehensive solutions, foundations are shifting their grantmaking strategies from categorical to comprehensive initiatives (i.e., initiatives that cut across several different program areas). Several are concentrating more resources on long-term, place-based community strategies designed to improve outcomes for children and youth. Other foundations are integrating best practices from youth development programs into crisis intervention programs or established community-based education and cultural programs previously without a specific youth development focus.

Trends in Grantmaking Strategies

These grantmaking patterns exist within broader foundation efforts to scale-up and sustain effective programs and policies. The surveyed foundations are rethinking their basic assumptions about how to create and sustain change on a more widespread basis. In the past, much grantmaking was based on a theory of linear sequential change. In this sequence, foundation-sponsored research and demonstration can lead to effective programs which are then disseminated and replicated and, finally, scaled-up. Foundations assume leadership in creating innovative pro-

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Spotlight continued from page 9

grams and expect the public sector to support the scale-up of programs with demonstrated effectiveness.

Based on their own critiques of past grantmaking experiences and strategic planning work, the foundations are beginning to operate on a comprehensive and simultaneous theory of change. The theory is that simultaneous and multicomponent strategies will lead to changes in the operating environment, which will create the demand, conditions, and capacity for scale-up and sustainability.

Most of the surveyed foundations fund in all the major grantmaking categories of knowledge development, capacity building, policy development, service delivery, dissemination, and public engagement. What is interesting is the way that these elements are put together into larger strategies from the start. For example, the multicomponent strategies simultaneously include support of research and demonstration, field development and expansion, and public engagement strategies. Unlike the linear theory of change, foundations assume leadership in creating the demand for scaled-up initiatives from their inception.

> Foundation officers interviewed agree that the youth development field needs a grantmaking strategy that focuses on capacity building, including training, leadership, and support for national intermediaries.

Uses of Evaluation

The shift to a multicomponent strategy entails the continuous development of knowledge to guide planning and implementation. Knowledge development consists of more diverse types of knowledge for a broader group of stakeholders and a greater range of purposes. Beyond research and demonstration, the expanded purposes include: understanding public perception of youth issues and informing the public about them; building the demand for policy change and accountability; determining and disseminating best practices for capacity building and scale-up; and using research and evaluation to maintain effectiveness.

All but one of the foundation officers interviewed reported that evaluation is more important now than in the past. They evaluate their large initiatives to learn about what is working and to identify the lessons for their strategies of scale-up and sustainability. Most foundations do not evaluate all individual grants. Many, however, require grantees to specify goals, benchmarks, outcomes, and lessons learned as part of their grantees' reporting procedures. About half are engaged in some activity to build grantee learning and evaluation capacity.

As learning and evaluation play a greater role within these foundations, several officers suggested that more cross-foundation discussion about evaluation issues and challenges would be useful. They also suggested including similar discussions about the theories of change underlying emerging grantmaking strategies and efforts to develop integrated learning, evaluation, and communication strategies. Sharing results and lessons learned would be particularly beneficial in the changing context of grantmaking for children and youth. ◆

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Director
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- ***Evaluation must be incorporated into the Community Action Plan.*** Community coalition programming and evaluation are more successful when planned early. The evaluation staff support coalitions with the development of program goals, objectives, and instruments through technical assistance before programs are implemented.

- ***Coalitions should be encouraged to take more responsibility for the evaluation as they progress by using community supports.*** As community coalition staff become more comfortable with evaluation, the project encourages them to seek evaluation support within their local community. Whether it is a college intern seeking experience or a knowledgeable coalition member, these people are invaluable to the sustainability of the evaluation.

As the first five years of the MAP Evaluation Project draw to a close, there have been many valuable lessons learned from the empowerment model of evaluation. These lessons may assist other communities that seek to increase capacity for evaluation and sustain the changes that the programs promote. ◇

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For information on submitting articles to *The Evaluation Exchange*, please call (617) 495-9108 or visit our Web site: http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~hfrp/eval

Job Opening

The Harvard Family Research Project is looking to hire a Research Analyst to work 75% on new project: building a comprehensive learning system in the after-school field; 25% on research/writing for *The Evaluation Exchange*. For full job description and application instructions, go to http://jobs.harvard.edu/jobs/search_req Refer to requisition #2145.

We regret that we cannot provide copies of the materials listed below. Please contact the publisher or authoring organization directly.

American Youth Policy Forum. (1997). ***Some things do make a difference for youth: A compendium of youth programs and practices from the American Youth Policy Forum.*** **Washington, DC: Author.** This publication summarizes 69 evaluation studies and reports of 49 programmatic interventions. The document begins with a summary of the basic principles for effective youth programs. The summaries are divided into three sections: Extended Learning; Building on the Community; and Increasing Retention and Postsecondary Education Options. Included in each summary is an overview, evidence of effectiveness, key components, contributing factors, study methodology, geographic areas served, contact information, and update on changes since the evaluation. The publication concludes with an afterword on implications for youth policy and practice. *Tel: (202) 775-9731. American Youth Policy Forum, 1836 Jefferson Place, N.W., Suite 719, Washington, DC 20036-2505.*

DeWitt-Wallace Reader's Digest Fund. (1995). ***Strengthening the youth work profession: Resource guide.*** **New York, NY: Author.** This guide provides information on organizations and publications/training materials related to the professional development of youth workers. Each entry has a brief description of the organization/publication and contact/order information. *Tel: (212) 251-9800. http://www.wallacefunds.org*

Fund for the City of New York. (1998). ***Core competencies for youth work. A guided tour of youth development. The handbook of positive youth outcomes.*** **New York, NY: Author.** These three guidebooks, developed and written by the Networks for Youth Development (a peer network of youth organizations promoting youth development as a field of practice and mastery), identify some of the key issues in the area of youth development, based on practical experience. The Core Competencies guide describes essential competencies that youth workers need and outlines what they look like in practice. The Guided Tour operationalizes the conceptual framework of youth development into visible organizational practices. The Outcomes Handbook defines the competencies that youth acquire through involvement in youth development programs. *Tel: (212) 925-6675. Fannie Olivera, Fund for the City of New York. Youth Development Institute. 121 Avenue of the Americas, 6th Floor. New York, NY 10013.*

Guerra, Nancy G. & Williams, Kirk R. ***A program planning guide for youth violence prevention: A risk-focused approach.*** **Boulder, CO: Author.** This planning guide, by the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, details the steps for planning violence prevention programs, including evaluation strategies, building on risk, and protective factors. This publication includes worksheets that can be used to guide communities in 1) defining the violence problems in their communities; 2) assessing community resources; 3) identifying promising programs; and 4) thinking about implementation and evaluation strategies. *http://patch.colorado.edu/cspv/infohouse/publications.html*

Morley, Elaine & Rossman, Shelli B. (1997). ***Helping at-risk youth: Lessons from community-based initiatives.*** **Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.** Drawing on the experiences of three national initiatives to help youth at risk (Communities in Schools, SafeFutures, and Children at Risk), this report presents findings and suggestions that may benefit other communities that are seeking to introduce or that already are in the process of implementing such efforts. Intended for both community leaders and program administrators, the report addresses five topics: services integration and case management; parental involvement; using volunteers for tutoring and mentoring; fund raising and marketing; and monitoring program outcomes. The report also includes a checklist of suggested practices. *http://www.urban.org/family/helpyouth.html*

Program Evaluation Newsletter. **Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.** This bimonthly publication is designed to assist programs in making decisions around program evaluation issues. It focuses on evaluation techniques and theory, and also provides advice on how programs can conduct evaluations that are meaningful and useful. $18.00 for a one-year subscription. *http://patch.colorado.edu/cspv/infohouse/publications.html*

Search Institute. (1998). ***Healthy communities/healthy youth tool kit.*** **Minneapolis, MN: Author.** Designed to meet the needs of communities and organizations looking for help with starting and sustaining an asset-building effort, this easy-to-use reference guide offers ideas, strategies, and examples. Included are guidelines for launching and sustaining a community-wide effort; discussions of issues related to mobilizing communities; suggestions on additional publications and resources; ready-to-use worksheets and handouts; and samples of brochures, newsletters, and other awareness-raising materials from communities across the nation. *Tel: (877) 240-7251. Search Institute, P.O. Box 371, Minneapolis, MN 55440-9732.*

Youth today: The newspaper on youth work. This publication of the American Youth Work Center provides information on best practices in youth service programs; career and networking opportunities; coverage of funding and judicial, regulatory and legislative matters; grant opportunities; professional development events; new products; and career moves. *Tel: (202) 785-0764. 1200 17th Street, N.W., 4th Floor, Washington, DC 20036-3006. E-mail: hn2759@handsnet.org* ◆

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Electronic Mailbox

Adolescence Directory On-Line
http://education.indiana.edu/cas/adol/adol.html
Adolescence Directory On-Line (ADOL) is an electronic guide to information on adolescent issues, provided by the Center for Adolescent Studies at Indiana University. It provides electronic sources in the areas of conflict and violence; mental health issues; health and health risk issues; counselor resources; and teens only.

Children, Youth and Families Education and Research Network
http://www.cyfernet.mes.umn.edu
The Children, Youth and Families Education and Research Network (CYFERNet) provides practical, research-based information on children, youth, and families. Information in this Internet-based service is provided by universities collaborating in the Cooperative Extension Service Children, Youth, and Family Network project. This site provides descriptions of successful programs, practical information on child and youth development, research reports, statistics, funding resources, evaluation tools, and links to other Internet resources.

Children, Youth and Family Consortium
http://www.cyfc.umn.edu
The Children, Youth and Family Consortium's Electronic Clearinghouse, housed at the University of Minnesota, is an electronic bridge to information and resources on children, youth, and families. The site features articles, research materials, and information related to the health, education, and well-being of children, youth, and families.

FEDSTATS
http://www.fedstats.gov
Maintained by the Federal Interagency Council on Statistical Policy, this Web site provides easy access to the full range of statistics and information produced by more than 70 federal agencies. Included are statistics from the Bureau of the Census, the National Center for Education Statistics, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the Administration for Children and Families, the Center for Mental Health Service, and the Department of Health and Human Services. This site also provides some regional statistics.

U.S. Department of Education
http://www.ed.gov
The U.S. Department of Education's Web site provides information on the Department's programs, publications, research, and statistics as well as links to other relevant Web sites.

YouthInfo
http://youth.os.dhhs.gov
This Web site, maintained by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provides the latest information about America's adolescents. It includes current news, reports, and other publications, and speeches on youth topics.

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THE EVALUATION EXCHANGE

Emerging Strategies in Evaluating Child and Family Services

Volume V, Number 2/3 1999 — Free Quarterly Newsletter

From the Director's Desk

Heather B. Weiss
Director, HFRP

I would like to begin by thanking all who responded to our reader survey. We appreciated hearing your comments about *The Evaluation Exchange*—what works and what doesn't—and how we can do better. Our goal is to produce an interactive newsletter, bringing together different voices and providing a forum for readers to share new ideas about evaluation. The information we received through the survey was therefore of great value to us. A brief summary of the survey results is on page 16. In response to your comments, we will be making some changes to the format of the newsletter—look for those in the next issue!

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In this issue, we include several articles on methodological topics, particularly those involving complex initiatives or problems. First, HFRP consultant Julia Coffman writes about using a logic model approach to evaluate a large and diverse foundation initiative, in our Theory and Practice section. We also include two articles on complex methodological issues in our Promising Practices section. The first, by James Kee of George Washington University, explains the difference between cost-benefit analysis and cost-effectiveness analysis, including some basic examples and tips about when to use each. The second, by Ellen Taylor-Powell at University of Wisconsin-Cooperative Extension, discusses what to think about when evaluating collaboratives.

In our Questions and Answers section this time, we speak with Michael Scriven, professor of psychology at Claremont University and immediate past president of the American Evaluation Association, about the challenges to evaluation in the coming years. We highlight two evaluations in our Evaluations to Watch section. The first, by Laura Pinsoneault and James Sass of Alliance for Children and Families, describes an ongoing evaluation of a national replication of the Middle School *Families and Schools Together* Program. The second evaluation, by Donna Peterson and her colleagues at The University of Arizona, describes the organizational evaluation of the Cooperative Extension System's capacity to support programs for children, youth, and families at risk. Our Beyond Basic Training section includes an article by Jill Chopyak on the community action research

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Simplifying Complex Initiative Evaluation

Introduction

Evaluators are increasingly facing the challenge of evaluating complex initiatives that are both multi-site and multi-level. These initiatives typically involve a number of different programs or organizations that have unique strategies and goals but are working toward a broader, common agenda. Both private and public sector funders are increasingly investing in complex initiatives with the intent that through them they will achieve a more strategic impact than they could make by funding individual programs. For example, complex initiatives can act as a catalyst for the connection and integration of different types of services or activities that may be needed to achieve broad-based change. In general, complex initiatives are expected to achieve more in terms of outcomes than would be possible with the sum of their individual parts.

In the last decade much has been learned about ways to evaluate complex initiatives. Theory-of-change and cluster evaluation have recently emerged as developing evaluation approaches that can aid evaluators facing the daunting task of designing and implementing complex initiatives such as comprehensive community initiatives. These approaches have helped evaluators make conceptual leaps in understanding how to address specific design challenges.

However, there is still much to be learned and shared. Of particular importance is achieving progress in describing complex initiative evaluations that are both efficient and effective, with due regard for reasonable time and resource boundaries. Additionally, there is a need for acquiring and sharing information on how to build management and reporting structures that complement these approaches.

In this article, we highlight two major lessons learned from theory-of-change and cluster evaluation about how to evaluate complex initiatives. In addition, within the context of our experiences evaluating the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's (WKKF) Devolution Initiative,[1] we share tips on how we applied those lessons to meet our own evaluation challenges.

The Devolution Initiative (DI) was created in 1996 to respond to some of the information and governing challenges associated with welfare reform and health care devolution—the passing of responsibility for policy and service development and management from the national level to the state and local levels. Specifically, the WKKF saw a need to support states and local governments in their efforts to take on these new responsibilities. Consistent with WKKF's mission to "help people help themselves," the DI strives to help citizens learn what is and is not working in various states with respect to welfare reform and health care so they can participate in the development and implementation of more effective policies in their communities. The more than 25 national, state, and local grantee organizations involved in the DI work toward this goal by building a base of knowledge about the impacts of devolution, disseminating findings to diverse target audiences that include policymakers and citizens, and building the capacity of communities and their citizens to participate in and inform the policy process.

> Because the DI was still developing, the stakeholders did not want to articulate too much of the strategic detail or give a sense of false precision by making premature decisions about outcomes.

Lessons and Tips from Tested Approaches

Some clear lessons can be gleaned from the work that has been completed on evaluating complex initiatives so far. We present two of these lessons below. For each, we provide practical tips on how these lessons might be applied, based on our experience with the Devolution Initiative.

Lesson: Articulate the Complex Initiative's Theory

It helps immensely to begin a complex initiative evaluation by articulating the broad theory (or theory of change) that weaves together the initiative's many strands. This theory can serve as a framework for interpreting the initiative's various layers and parts. The evaluation literature includes a wealth of information on ways to tease out program theory. The logic model is one of the most frequently used tools for this task, and there are many evaluation resources available on how to develop logic models. The models developed using these resources generally share as common ground the identification of initiative activities and how they relate to short-, intermediate-, and long-term outcomes.

Tip: Begin with a Broad Conceptual Model of the Initiative's Theory

We began our evaluation by attempting to develop a logic model to articulate the Devolution Initiative's theory of change. We found, however, that our desire to work with stakeholders to build a theory of change that *fully* articulated the short-, intermediate-, and long-term outcomes for each Initiative layer (individual, community, state, national) conflicted both with our time constraints (we needed to *quickly* develop and begin implementing an evaluation design) and with the fact that the DI was too early in its development to do that.

1 Note that this evaluation is still in progress.

Because the DI was still developing, the Initiative's stakeholders did not want to articulate too much of the strategic detail or give a sense of false precision by making premature decisions about outcomes.

As a result, rather than enumerating all of the DI's outcomes as a typical theory articulation process might do, we began by developing a broad conceptual model of the DI, one that illustrated its goals (or activities, depending how you look at it) and the general *non-causal* relationships between them (see Figure 1).

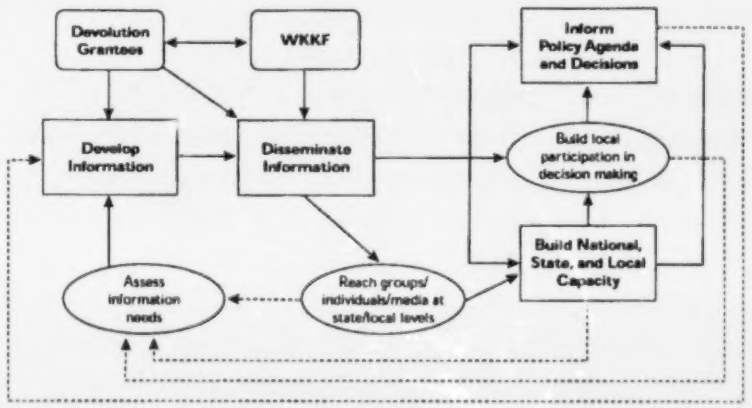
The advantages to using this type of model were substantial. First, the model's early timing and quick development were critical. Because the DI was in its beginning stages, the model served as an effective socialization tool for getting an early shared understanding among stakeholders of what the Initiative was trying to achieve. Using a more traditional model that identified and achieved consensus on specific outcomes at this early point in time would likely have been met with frustration, and might have stalled the evaluation early on.

A second advantage of this model was its simplicity and broadness. Each grantee organization was able to understand how its individual activities fit within the Initiative's broader context.

Another advantage of the model was its usefulness as a starting point for later theory articulation. As we describe below, while the model did not identify specific outcomes at first, we were able to use it later as the basis for identifying outcomes that could be attached directly to the model and further guide the evaluation.

Finally, probably the most important feature of the model was its sustainability. The DI evolved substantially over time,

Figure 1 WKKF Devolution Initiative



both strategically and in terms of the number of organizations involved. Despite these changes, the overall model changed only slightly, because Initiative changes for the most part could be accommodated beneath the level of this overarching structure. This was critical because as we describe below, the model became the organizing structure for the evaluation's design and management.

Lesson: Use the Initiative's Theory as a Framework for Designing the Evaluation

Connecting the evaluation design to the initiative's theory makes sense. The theory typically lays out what needs to be assessed in terms of both process and outcomes. Once you have that necessary focus, you can proceed through standard evaluation design steps, which may include identifying benchmarks or indicators connected to those outcomes and the methods needed to track them.

This lesson can be difficult to apply, but keeping certain principles in mind will help. For example, you want to make sure that if you focus on the theory's parts (boxes in the logic model), you don't lose sight of their connections (arrows in the logic model). In addition, you want to develop a design that is easy to manage and keeps data collection and reporting focused on what is being learned about the initiative's theory as a whole and not only on its parts.

Tip: Develop Evaluation Objectives Linked Directly to the Model

Our first and most important step in the design process was to break the Devolution Initiative's model into evaluation objectives in order to make the evaluation in general more manageable (see Box 1).

The objectives focused on distinct pieces of the model and their relationships to one another. As a result, the objectives highlighted the importance of examining the links between the main model components. For example, Objective 2 involved several parts of the model. It was concerned with grantee information development and dissemination activities in terms of the types of information developed and the various mechanisms used to disseminate the in-

Continued on page 15

BOX 1 Devolution Initiative Evaluation Objectives

Objective 1:	Examine WKKF and Devolution grantee roles in information development and dissemination.
Objective 2:	Examine links between information development, dissemination, and target audiences.
Objective 3:	Examine capacity-building activities.
Objective 4:	Examine the link between building capacity and increasing state and local participation in policymaking.
Objective 5:	Examine the Initiative's success in informing the policy agenda.

At What Price? Benefit-Cost Analysis and Cost-Effectiveness Analysis in Program Evaluation

Introduction

In our current age of accountability, public and private sector funders are increasingly concerned with the relative costs and benefits of the programs they fund. Benefit-cost (or cost-benefit) and cost-effectiveness analyses can be useful quantitative tools to help address these concerns. However, they differ in their purposes, and each has strengths and limitations.

Benefit-cost analysis is an applied branch of economics that attempts to assess service programs by determining whether total societal welfare has increased (in the aggregate, people have been made better off) because of a given project or program. It can be used in evaluations of existing programs to assess their overall success or failure, to help determine whether the programs should be continued or modified, and to assess the probable results of proposed program changes. Benefit-cost analysis consists of three steps: (1) determine the benefits of a proposed or existing program and place a dollar value on those benefits; (2) calculate the total costs of the program; (3) compare the benefits and the costs.

Cost-effectiveness analysis is an alternative to benefit-cost analysis that relates the cost of a given alternative to specific measures of program objectives. A cost-effectiveness analysis helps to compare costs to units of program objectives and may be the first step in a benefit-cost analysis if the analyst then decides to attempt to place a dollar value on the benefits. Unlike benefit-cost analysis, cost-effectiveness analysis does not produce a "net benefit" number, with benefits exceeding costs or costs exceeding benefits. However, a cost-effectiveness analysis can determine that a program which costs $1 million produces ten units of outcome *x*, twelve units of outcome *y*, and twenty units of outcome *z*. Or, if the units are alike, it can determine the cost per unit of outcome.

An example of these two methods of analysis using a hypothetical dropout prevention program is presented in Box 2.

Challenges in Conducting Benefit-Cost and Cost-Effectiveness Evaluations

Identifying and Measuring Costs

Identifying and measuring costs, and in the case of benefit-cost analysis, quantifying and placing a dollar value on the benefits, is the biggest challenge to the evaluator trying to conduct these types of analyses. Direct costs (such as personnel, materials, and equipment) are often relatively easy to account for. Indirect costs (such as overhead, costs to other providers supporting the intervention, and costs to participants) as well as capital costs (such as buildings and computers) can be more difficult to calculate. Finally, intangible costs (such as the value of wilderness) are those for which the evaluator either cannot assign an explicit price or chooses not to. Lack of assigned price does not mean that intangible costs are unimportant; indeed, in presenting any results of these types of analyses, the evaluator should point out the intangible costs and benefits, thereby enabling the decision maker to consider these as he or she examines those benefits and costs that are quantified. When identifying any benefit or cost, it is important to state its *nature* clearly, to state *how* it is being measured, and to list any *assumptions* made in the calculation of the dollars involved.

BOX 2 Hypothetical Cost-Effectiveness and Benefit-Cost Results for Dropout Prevention Strategies

Cost-Effectiveness

The cost-effectiveness of each dropout prevention strategy is determined by dividing the cost for each strategy by its effectiveness (e.g. the percentage increase in the number of students graduating). The result is the cost for each percent increase in the number of students graduating.

Strategy	*Costs*	*Effectiveness*	*C/E Ratio*
Mentoring	$80,000	10	$8,000
After-School Sports	$65,000	5	$13,000

Benefit-Cost

The benefit-cost for each dropout prevention strategy is determined by calculating each strategy's benefits (e.g. estimates of future earning increases of participants who stayed in school) and costs (e.g. personnel, materials, equipment) and then subtracting the benefits from the costs to get the net benefit for each strategy. The benefit-cost ratio can also be computed by dividing the dollar value of benefits by the costs (the higher the ratio, the more efficient the program in economic terms).

Strategy	*Costs*	*Benefits*	*Net Benefits*	*B/C Ratio*
Mentoring	$80,000	$95,000	$15,000	1.188
After-School Sports	$65,000	$75,000	$10,000	1.154

Identifying and Measuring Benefits

Identifying benefits can also be tricky. As with costs, there are direct, indirect, and intangible benefits. In the case of benefit-cost analysis, placing a dollar value on the benefits is also a challenge. The evaluator might choose a market value, when one is available, or a surrogate such as willingness to pay. Because of the redistributional nature of government programs, public agencies and those who evaluate them must be concerned with who benefits as well as the *amount* of benefits in addition to the costs.

Where quantifying benefits is difficult, costly, or viewed as inappropriate, cost-effectiveness analysis can be used. Cost-effectiveness evaluation does not require that the evaluator place a dollar value on the benefits. This is particularly useful in cases where the benefit of a program is "lives saved." While there are various ways to place a dollar value on a life saved or lost, each is controversial. In contrast to a benefit-cost analysis, a cost-effectiveness evaluation would calculate the cost of the program per life saved without making a judgment about the dollar value of that life. The evaluator would then present the results to the decision maker who must decide whether an outcome is worth the dollar cost when viewed in light of alternative uses for the funds.

A major challenge in cost-effectiveness analysis is the fact that programs frequently generate more than one type of benefit. For example, an education system might target more than one population group in the school system. When conducting a cost-effectiveness analysis comparing programs with multiple benefits, the evaluator may need to place weights on the relative benefits to assist the decision maker in making comparisons. If this is not done, the comparison becomes quite subjective. Yet assigning weights often becomes at least as problematic as assigning dollar values to each benefit: how do the benefits to one population group outweigh those to another, for example?

Boundaries

Another challenge in conducting benefit-cost and cost-effectiveness analyses is determining the geographic scope of an analysis. While the focus may be within a certain jurisdiction, such as a state, there may be benefits or costs that spill over to neighboring jurisdictions. It might be tempting to ignore spillover effects, but this can be unwise since spillovers often have political consequences. The question for the evaluator is whether to consider only those benefits and costs that accrue to the population within the jurisdiction for which the evaluator is doing the analysis.

Detail

One of the biggest dangers in these analyses, as in many other areas of evaluation, is the "black box" syndrome. Instead of laying out the relevant issues, assumptions, and concerns, the evaluator may be tempted to hide the messiness of the analysis from the decision maker, presenting a concise answer as to the net benefits or costs or cost-effectiveness. However, it is the detail—the assumptions involved and the sensitivity of the analysis to particular assumptions—which may be of most use to the decision makers in judging the value and usefulness of the evaluator's work.

Deciding Between Cost-Effectiveness Analysis and Benefit-Cost Analysis

Those faced with deciding between the two types of analysis may find it helpful to keep three basic questions in mind:

1. How will you use the results? Benefit-cost analysis enables you to compare strategies that do not have the same outcomes, or to compare strategies across different areas of public expenditure (e.g., health, welfare, justice). Cost-effectiveness analysis is useful for comparing strategies that are trying to achieve the same objective (e.g., increased graduation rates).
2. What resources do you have? Benefit-cost analyses typically require more resources, because they take more time for analysis and involve significant methodological expertise (often in economics), such as the capacity for determining the discounted present value of a stream of benefits and costs.
3. How difficult are costs and benefits to value? While you may want to have as much information as possible on both benefits and costs, you must weigh the value of the increased accuracy gained from the accumulation of new data against the costs associated with the data collection. Thus, any analysis should begin by assimilating existing data to determine whether it is sufficient.

The more intangible the benefit (for example saved wilderness), the more likely it is that a cost-effectiveness analysis will be of greater use to decision makers. This type of analysis can help them assess whether a cost is justifiable, when compared with other uses of the same funds.

It is important to note that benefit-cost analysis and cost-effectiveness analysis could lead to different conclusions about the same program, depending upon how benefits are valued in dollar terms. However, if the evaluation is concerned with a program with a single objective (or closely related objectives), programs or alternatives achieving the highest cost-effectiveness should also achieve the highest benefit-cost ratio.

Neither benefit-cost analysis nor cost-effectiveness analysis is a panacea. Both require judgments on measurement issues that should be brought to the attention of the decision maker. However, both techniques are useful to provide a format for analysis that can lead to better decisions. ◇

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For Further Reading

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Evaluating Collaboratives[1]: Challenges and Practice

During the past years, the faculty and staff of University of Wisconsin-Cooperative Extension have increasingly found themselves engaged in collaborative work, playing unfamiliar roles or interacting in new situations with new players. The venue might be a community-based initiative, an interagency partnership, or an interdisciplinary work team in the area of agriculture, family living and nutrition education, 4-H and youth development, or community and economic development. Familiar evaluation practices—ones largely built on a discrete or distinct program delivered by one agency—do not fit this new context.

Collaboration is widely heralded as a mechanism for leveraging resources, dealing with scarcities, eliminating duplication, capitalizing on individual strengths, and building capacities. It offers the possibility for increasing participation and ownership, strengthened by the potential for synergy and greater impact. Yet, for all of us working in and with collaboratives, the challenges are numerous. Several, in particular, are stretching us to think about evaluation in new ways.

Evolving Nature

Collaboratives are dynamic and flexible, changing as they develop. They may look different from year to year. The membership or the roles of members may change, bringing new direction and emphasis. Some collaboratives have a clearly defined start and finish time, but many do not. They may not even start out being a collaborative. There is no grand plan. Rather, the work and direction of the group are invented as the members work together. Implementation may never be complete and is often difficult to track.

In this setting, *process* becomes particularly important. Conventional program evaluation and many current funders focus on activities that are delivered. We find, however, that special attention must be paid to the workings of the collaborative if it is to successfully deliver activities and programs. This includes the capacities, operations, and climate of the collaborative. In this outcomes era, we are finding it necessary to educate our constituents and funders about process and the linkage between process and outcomes.

Collaboration is widely heralded as a mechanism for leveraging resources, dealing with scarcities, eliminating duplication, capitalizing on individual strengths, and building capacities.

Integrating process evaluation into a collaborative provides information for internal decision making, visibility, legitimization, and accountability. There are several ways in which this has been done. In one case, a community-based initiative guards 15 minutes at the end of every meeting to engage in a "how are we doing" process. Members facilitate a question-and-answer period on a rotating basis and write up and share the results. Accomplishments and issues being worked on are featured in a quarterly column in the local newspaper. In another case, an interdisciplinary work team has enlisted one member to evaluate its process and progress. This member summarizes the minutes of meetings and uses content analysis to keep track of decisions, actions, and achievements; observes team interactions and discussions; and conducts an annual survey of members to assess levels of satisfaction, capacity development, and operations. Ongoing feedback is provided to the team, and annual reports are submitted to administration. In yet another example, a community partnership is using the group member survey developed by Cooperative Extension to engage members in a process of self-assessment and learning. Members were informed of the evaluation opportunity and they committed to completing the survey. Teams of members volunteer to present and discuss the results at a series of meetings that engage the full group in interpretation and action related to the findings.

Broad Goals and Expected Outcomes

Collaboratives form for many reasons. Some seek to develop and sustain resilient families or communities. Others are initiated to provide a particular service, to leverage resources, to coordinate efforts, or to effect greater integration of activities or services. Other collaboratives instigate social activism, or seek to create consensus around politically charged issues such as land use or school improvements. Often groups may not have a clearly defined or single purpose or one that all agree to or understand.

Coming to a shared understanding of the collaborative's goals and expected outcomes is critical. Time is needed to discuss and negotiate this vision as the collaborative forms and as the collaborative evolves, since initial expectations, context, or membership may change. Creating a logic model—*mapping the collaborative jour-*

1 A collaborative is defined as a group working together to achieve a shared vision. Members engage in a process where they constructively explore their differences and search for (and implement) solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible. [Gray, Barbara. (1989). *Collaborating: Finding common ground for multi-party problems.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc.]

ney—makes explicit the ideas members hold about what results are desired and how to achieve them. We have found that drawing the logic model, either individually or as a group, is a fun and useful process. We use newsprint and allow members to use any metaphor, design, or thought process to show the chain of events and desired final outcomes. Members then share their pictures; similarities and differences are noted and discussed as the beginning of building consensus on expected outcomes and the strategy for achieving them. Stakeholders are involved in the process to spread understanding and ownership.

Multiple Outcomes

Collaboratives often struggle with defining and measuring outcomes. As part of the logic modeling, differentiating among types of outcomes—*which outcomes; for whom*—helps members set realistic expectations. There may be *outcomes for individuals* that include changes in attitudes, knowledge, skills, behavior, actions, and/or lifestyles for clients, community residents, collaborative members themselves, and/or service providers. There may be *outcomes for groups* such as changes in interactions, values, or behaviors of families, the work group, the community group, or the collaborative itself. Often, collaboratives are focused on *agency or organizational outcomes* such as changes in service delivery, resource generation and use, practices, and policies. Some collaboratives are interested in *system outcomes* in which agencies, departments, or whole organizations work in new ways, behave differently, share resources, and provide services in an integrated fashion. Finally, collaboratives may be focused on *outcomes for communities*, including changes in norms, policies, or actions at a community-wide level. Collaboratives may lead to the institutionalization of change or the empowerment of individuals or groups. We find that collaboratives often have impact in more than one area, and the unanticipated outcomes are significant in terms of human and social capital development.

Asking questions about outcomes—*what outcomes, for whom, when might we see them, how will we know it, what else is happening that we didn't anticipate?*—helps us detect and document results. One example of this is a family preservation and support initiative that collects longitudinal data through a series of interviews with participating families to document their evolving ability to deal with stress, access community resources, and reduce family isolation (family outcomes). In another case, a collaborative of youth-serving agencies, working to open up membership to youth, compiled membership data before and after the two-year effort to assess changes in membership (agency outcomes). In yet another example, a community gardening initiative collects data through observation, interviews with participants and leaders, a sample survey of residents, and logs kept by staff to assess interaction among neighbors and changes in attitudes, helping behaviors, and responsibilities concerning the neighborhood (community outcomes).

Individual Performance

Collaboratives are built on the premise that the whole is greater than the sum of the individual parts, but individuals make up the collaborative and many have performance appraisal systems that require evidence of individual performance. How can one assess individual performance without undermining the essence of the collaborative?

Collaborative members, who need to report to their supervisors or are concerned with personal accountability, are using a variety of techniques for defining their own contribution to the team effort and outcomes. These include using a log book or diary to track one's inputs, activities, outcomes, and impact; using meeting minutes or other documentation to determine the role and influence of individual members; engaging members in evaluating each other in a nonjudgmental process; and using surveys, group discussions, or interviews with key stakeholders to collect data on member contributions and influence on outcomes. When individual members are responsible for a particular activity, it might also be possible to evaluate that event/activity and link the results to the member's effort.

Collaboration as a Panacea

Collaboratives are being promoted, expected, or required everywhere. Yet, it seems that a critical initial question is often overlooked: *Is a collaborative warranted—is it the most appropriate approach?* Some groups and/or communities are not ready for collaboration; some problems do not need a collaborative approach; and sometimes an individual's background and/or the agency's mission do not fit that of the collaborative. As we look at this dimension, a variety of evaluative questions emerge that relate to the context and readiness for collaboration in the community and external environment, in the organization, and among stakeholders.

We think about this as feasibility evaluation that typically occurs at the beginning of an initiative and is often informal. Some collaboratives are using a readiness questionnaire to ascertain a number of factors, such as the willingness of the community and/or individuals to work together, levels of cooperation and trust, history of previous work, potential barriers to success, and the availability of leadership. Besides the initial feasibility evaluation, each time the collaborative changes, adds new members, or begins a new initiative, it seems important for the group to discuss the feasibility of each—the potential for success, the resources needed, and the compatibility. Again, we are finding it important to help partners and funders consider whether collaboration is the best approach and what technical assistance may be necessary.

Our approach as partners in collaboratives across Wisconsin is to view evaluation as learning and as a shared process among members and stakeholders. Evaluation in the collaborative context becomes a collaborative process itself. The purpose, direction, and expectations for evaluation are negotiated among the collaborative members. When evaluation becomes a part of the collaborative, it provides the focus, feedback, and learning to support continuous progress and growth. ◇

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Parts of this article are taken from Ellen Taylor-Powell, Boyd Rossing, and Jean Geran. (1998). Evaluating collaboratives: Reaching the potential. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin-Cooperative Extension. (available at http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluat.html)

Interview with Michael Scriven

In this issue, we speak with Michael Scriven, professor of psychology at Claremont Graduate School and immediate past president of the American Evaluation Association. Dr. Scriven has written or edited books, periodicals, and articles in the areas of philosophy and psychology, word processing, turbine engines, artificial intelligence, critical thinking, and evaluation. In this article he shares with us some of his insights about the challenges facing evaluation, about evaluation as a distinct discipline, and about links between evaluation and practice, including organizational learning.

(1) What do you see as some of the major challenges facing evaluation and evaluators in this new century?

I think the biggest challenge we have is developing recognition of evaluation as an autonomous discipline. We know that in evaluation, there is a body of knowledge, a common logic that people will have to master to do this work well. We have increasingly been recognizing the highly specialized skills that are also required, but we need to go beyond that.

For example, knowing when to use what type of evaluation approach is a skill—and it's a skill that takes some knowledge of the underlying logical distinctions between grading, ranking, and apportioning. On the other hand, cost analysis is a skill that has been developed very well by specialists, although it is still not widely practiced in a sophisticated form by most evaluators. So there is room for improvement in the basic skills as well as the logical skills. Another skill, one that is still not well developed anywhere, is knowing how to set standards after you determine performance levels. Increasingly, however, we are realizing that evaluation is different from the standard scientific paradigm in that in evaluation, we rely on investigative skills rather than on hypothesis testing. Finally, evaluation has a set of ethical standards unique to its work.

I think another challenge we have is that we must break from the widespread attachment to the idea of interactive or collaborative evaluation as the standard model. While collaborative approaches to evaluation are important, some very good evaluations are done completely separately from the program being evaluated—they are not in any sense collaborative. In some cases, this is out of sheer necessity (e.g. in historical evaluation), but in other cases it may be a more deliberate choice (e.g., in contexts where the preservation of independence is crucial).

(2) Should evaluation be considered a separate discipline?

I think the importance of evaluation as a separate discipline is slowly being recognized. The field of statistics evolved out of mathematics in the same way. But there are as yet no universities that are developing evaluation departments or even chairs in evaluation. It is important, I think, that we went from 9 to 23 national associations of professional evaluators worldwide in the past year. To get greater recognition for the field of evaluation we still have to improve our professional training. For in-service training, there are now certificates of advanced study and summer institutes in which evaluators can upgrade their skills. We need to improve on that system with graduate degrees that involve a major in evaluation, not just in educational evaluation or policy analysis.

To get greater recognition for the field of evaluation, we still have to improve our professional training.

Partly because we are still treating evaluation as simply a "tool" discipline, we have so far virtually overlooked two other important areas in evaluation: the use of evaluation in other disciplines (such as physics) and meta-evaluation (evaluation of evaluation). Physicists have to evaluate everything they deal with: theories, data, instruments, scientific papers and proposals for funding, candidates, and students. They learn how to do this as part of their scientific training; but, unlike everything else in that training (e.g. the mathematics they use), it is never explicitly addressed as a logical discipline. The history of science makes it clear that very large improvements in practice occur from explicating implicit principles. We already see this in the improvements in proposal evaluation that have been shown to be possible in the sciences.

(3) Some argue that evaluation needs to be better linked to the policymaking process. What is your opinion about this?

I do agree that program evaluation needs to be better linked with policymaking about the program evaluated. But our duty in this area is to produce valid, comprehensible, and appropriate evaluations. The evaluator's business is simply that of determining the merit, worth, or significance of what he or she is looking at. The service we provide is telling what is or is not working and, sometimes, finding the reasons why. I don't think we should be in the business of telling policymakers what they should be doing next—that is the role of policy analysts. These people look at the broader picture—taking into account the decision makers as well as the many other variables involved in a political decision. These variables are not addressed in program evaluation. I do think the program/policy analyst needs better evaluation skills, but this is still the person who has the responsibility and the knowledge to make policy recommendations.

For example, I was sole evaluator for a community foundation. They asked me to look at their youth leadership program, a program that trained youth to be leaders in the community. In my evaluation, I found

several things: there was no evident need to train youth in the community; the approach they used had no basis in theory; and there was no data from three years of work that the program had any effect. My tendency was to say, "Shut it down." However, in reality the situation depended on some political matters. The board of trustees for this foundation is completely unpaid. As a result, the members each implicitly get a "wildcard"—a program they like and want to fund because they think it is a good thing, without debate. That was the case with the youth leadership program—no matter what the evaluator says, the program is not going to be abandoned. This is the reality of the political process, of real decision making.

That is not to say that evaluators can have no influence or should not seek to inform the policy process. Evaluation has a major contribution to make, but we need to reach the right audience and we need to be realistic in our ambitions. What we should be good at is servicing policymakers who need answers about what works and why. We can also inform policymakers through legislative evaluators, those state and federal legislative offices that do program evaluation or policy research for legislators. These are the unseen beavers who get the dam built. They respond to committee and legislator requests for information on particular topics. If evaluators want to get their stuff out there and see it better used, these are the folks that they ought to be reaching—and these are the folks who are often more accessible.

(4) Some argue that evaluation needs to be better linked to on-the-ground practice. What is your opinion about this?

I think we are a remarkable discipline in that the usual academic versus application distinction has been almost entirely absent. It's still true that there is room for improvement in codifying best practices. There need to be mechanisms (e.g., research secretaries on each project), to link evaluation findings to methodological work in a field. Some are trying by linking with training and higher education institutions. But we also need to take some action on our own—publish in other journals beyond academic ones, make sure our findings reach program/policy analysts, and attend congressional hearings.

(5) How do you think evaluation (and accountability requirements) can be better used for organizational learning and continuous improvement of programs?

People involved in "organizational learning" reforms need good program evaluation skills and good personnel evaluation skills. The detail of this learning is tricky—how do you really decide what the lesson was? How do you design a study to learn results? What is the methodology involved? These are tough evaluation questions, and the skills are not taught in business schools.

Organizations have to develop a plan to integrate policymaking and programming—what questions they want answered, how data will be reviewed, how data will be used. A good evaluator helps with these questions. One of the most recent changes has been the focus on performance measurement. I don't think this focus on outcomes is bad—I've seen programs take years to get up and running, and then have nothing to show for their work. Performance measurement is important—it is the bottom line. However, performance measurement as it has become lately is inflating one aspect of evaluation into the whole. We used to make exactly the complementary error, in the guise of process evaluation. I think you need to balance the two; you cannot ignore how you got to the outcomes. The most important way to do that is to negotiate expectations early on in the contracting process. ◇

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JOB OPENING

Research Associate

The Harvard Family Research Project, a research department at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, is hiring a full-time staff member to direct research efforts for its quarterly newsletter, *The Evaluation Exchange*, and to conduct research on other projects related to evaluation. The Research Associate will:

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- Conduct research on other HFRP projects related to evaluation design, evaluation approaches, and evaluation utilization. Assist in research design, development of data collection protocols, data collection, and data analysis. Write reports and present research results at various national conferences.

A Master's degree and five or more years of professional experience are required, with a doctorate preferred. Applicants should also have experience with program evaluation and/or participatory research and familiarity with qualitative research methodology and/or current evaluation theory, as well as excellent writing skills and publication record. The Research Associate reports to the Director and works closely with other research staff. The position is grant-funded through 6/30/01, with strong likelihood of continuation.

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Evaluating the National Replication of a Prevention Program for Youth and Their Families: Middle School *Families and Schools Together*

Introduction

In 1997, the Alliance for Children and Families, with major support from the DeWitt Wallace–Reader's Digest Fund, began replicating and evaluating the middle school adaptation of the *Families and Schools Together (FAST)* program. This program adaptation was developed in 1991 by staff of Family Service in Madison, Wisconsin, as part of a Center for Substance Abuse Prevention High Risk Youth Grant. Middle School *FAST* is a school-based, whole-family program intended to increase the likelihood of youth success in the home, in the school, and in the community. Program activities build positive, respectful, and supportive relationships for middle school youth, their parents, and other family members.

Middle school youth are recruited for the program and begin participation in a school-based youth group facilitated by a youth advocate. Four weeks into the youth group, the whole family begins attending 10 weekly, multiple-family meetings at which they engage in research-based activities designed to be fun, to strengthen the family unit, and to build support networks. At the end of the 14 weeks, families graduate into FASTWORKS, a parent- and youth-led multiple-family group that meets monthly for the next two years to continue building on the bonds created during the weekly sessions of *FAST*.

As of May 1999, 29 Middle School *FAST* program cycles have been implemented and evaluated. Family- and child-serving agencies in eight states conducted these cycles in 23 middle schools. Ninety-one percent of the families who began the Middle School program attended eight or more sessions, and graduated. The average age of the youth participants is 12 years, with the largest proportion of youths in sixth (42%) or seventh (30%) grade. About 56% of the youths are male and 44% are female. Approximately half of the graduating youths are Caucasian, and one-quarter each are African-American or Hispanic. Two hundred three (203) youths and their families have completed evaluation data.

Evaluation Design

The evaluation design for Middle School *FAST* is based on the design for the elementary school *FAST* program (Billingham, 1993; McDonald and Billingham, 1992). It is a nonexperimental pre-test/post-test design focusing on initial outcomes and protective factors. At the initial recruitment visit, the parent(s) and the youth give written consent to participate in the evaluation. The youth completes one pre-/post-instrument, and a qualitative questionnaire at the post-test. The parent completes four pre-/post-instruments, and family demographics and qualitative questionnaires at the post-test. (The youth and parent qualitative questionnaires assess the participants' program experiences.) The evaluation procedures encourage collecting all pre-tests prior to the start of the youth group meetings, but permit parent forms to be collected before the start of the first multiple-family meeting. Post-tests are administered within two weeks after graduation. In addition to the measures collected from the youth and their parents, an academic information form is submitted to the school.

> Thus far, from this design we have learned lessons in four areas: response rate, parent-school involvement, long-term outcomes, and asset-based measurement.

Instruments

As an early intervention/prevention program, Middle School *FAST* focuses on factors that exhibit high correlations with the onset of school failure, violence, delinquency, or substance abuse in later adolescence and adulthood. These factors are family environment, youth behavior, and parent-school involvement.

Family Environment. Families complete two forms that measure characteristics of healthy families. Both youths and their parents complete the Family Relationships Index of the Family Environment Scale (Moos & Moos, 1994) to assess the quality of family relationships. The Family Relationships Index (27 items) consists of three subscales: Cohesion, Expressiveness, and Conflict. Pre-test/post-test comparisons show significant improvements on three subscales for the parents and on one subscale for the youths. Parents also complete the Isolation subscale of the Parenting Stress Index (Abidin, 1995). This subscale is a six-item measure of the parent's sense of a lack of social support.

Youth Behavior Problems. To assess behavior problems, *FAST* uses the six scales of the Revised Behavior Problem Checklist (Quay and Peterson, 1987): conduct disorder, socialized aggression, attention problems, anxiety/withdrawal, psychotic behaviors, and motor excess.

Parent-School Involvement. Middle School *FAST* now uses 21 items of the Parent Survey (Witte, 1991) to assess changes in parent contact with the school, school contact

with the parents, parental involvement in school organizations, and parental participation in school-related activities with their child.

Discussion

Evaluation has been central to the *FAST* process since the program's inception. In order to facilitate the use of evaluation within *FAST* communities, standardized instruments that are easily administered and understood by families were selected to measure multiple outcome areas linked to risk and protective factors. Notwithstanding the usefulness of the current package, the middle school evaluation is still in the development phase. Thus far, from this design we have learned lessons in four areas: response rate, parent-school involvement, long-term outcomes, and asset-based measurement.

Response Rate. The current, more concise version has received a better response than did the original evaluation package, which contained five pre/post measures for the parents and three for the youth. The increased response rate is attributed to decreased resistance from team members in administering the evaluation instruments, and reduced fatigue from families. The overall response rate has been about 80 percent across the 29 program cycles. However, the response rate for academic data has been much lower. The 14-week *FAST* cycle does not easily fall within a typical semester's grading period. Furthermore, there is no national set of academic and behavior standards that can be used to create a set of national *FAST* outcomes. Schools have provided academic data for less than 5 percent of the program youth. Therefore, *FAST* has been unable to track outcomes in academic achievement. This low figure indicates a need to establish improved forms and procedures for collecting academic data. The immediate solution has been to permit communities to create their own forms for assessing academic indicators, but the national consistency has been lost.

Parent-School Involvement. The Parent Survey (Witte, 1991) replaced an earlier measure that assessed parents' satisfaction with the middle school. The connection between satisfaction and program goals is tenuous at best. As program sites noted, a parent who becomes more actively involved with a school may also become less satisfied with that school. The Parent Survey, using items similar to those on the National Education Longitudinal Study, directly assesses the amount of parent contact and involvement, but does not measure the quality of contact between parents and schools.

Long-Term Outcomes. Evaluation reports based on the initial 14-week outcomes have been a vital tool for Middle School *FAST* program sites in securing funding and assessing program quality and effectiveness. Still, longitudinal data are necessary to evaluate Middle School *FAST*'s effectiveness as a prevention program for youth and their families. A longitudinal evaluation component addressing maintenance of the changes that occur at *FAST* is important to the future of the program. Due to the maturational changes that occur during adolescence, control and/or comparison groups will be critical for capturing the long-term effects that can be attributed to the program. Allliance members and Middle School *FAST* communities are working to seek out additional funding resources for more longitudinal research.

Asset-Based Measurement. Two of the evaluation measures explicitly focus on deficits or problems (Abidin, 1995; Quay and Peterson, 1987). Although the measurement of deficits is common in social service assessment, this approach is not consistent with *FAST*'s emphasis on building on the strengths already present in families. Thus, asset-based measures (e.g., Epstein, 1998; Lengyel, Thompson, and Niesl, 1997) deserve serious consideration as tools for evaluating Middle School *FAST*. ◇

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Got a Puzzling Evaluation Question?

In our next issue, we will be launching a new section entitled Ask the Expert. In this section, we will ask evaluators to answer tough evaluation questions sent to us by our readers. If you have a question you would like answered, please e-mail it to us at hfrp_gse@harvard.edu. Be sure to reference *The Evaluation Exchange* in your subject line or in the body of your message. Please note that the number of questions answered and the length of the answers will depend on the volume of requests we receive, and we may not be able to answer all questions.

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For more information about this evaluation, please contact Jim Sass at (414) 359-1040, ext. 3612; jsass@alliance1.org.

Cooperative Extension's Capacity to Support Programs For Children, Youth, and Families At Risk: The Organizational Change Survey

Introduction

In 1991, the Cooperative State Research, Education, Extension Service (CSREES), responding to pervasive conditions in America that place children and their families at risk for not having basic needs met, introduced the Children, Youth and Families At Risk (CYFAR) National Initiative. The Cooperative Extension System is based in land-grant universities and has a mission of disseminating, through educational programs, research-based knowledge to communities in order to improve their economic, environmental, and social conditions. CSREES utilizes national initiatives to [illegible] direction and special attention to the development of educational programming within the Cooperative Extension System.

Through the CYFAR Initiative, the Cooperative Extension System made a commitment to support programs for at-risk children, youth, and families. This initiative emphasizes a holistic approach to educational prevention programs that facilitate the development and maintenance of healthy, happy environments in which those at risk are enabled to develop life skills necessary for contributing, fulfilling lives. While Cooperative Extension had the knowledge base and the resources to make a significant difference in communities, it needed to find effective ways to expand its educational programs to at-risk audiences. Thus, the CYFAR Initiative involved a significant expansion of constituencies for Cooperative Extension nationally.

Given this organizational shift in programmatic focus, the CSREES, under contract with The University of Arizona, initiated an evaluation collaboration with state Extension systems implementing CYFAR programs. As a result, the Organizational Change Survey (OCS) was developed to assess states' abilities to develop and sustain effective programs for children, youth, and families at risk. The survey was implemented from late 1997 to early 1998 to document the current state of Extension systems and to establish a baseline. It will be repeated in 2000-2001 to assess any changes that have been implemented. Ultimately, if the broader organizational changes were effective, Extension professionals will feel better equipped and supported in carrying out program-level goals for serving at-risk audiences.

Survey Design

OCS was loosely based on the national surveys conducted by the Search Institute in 1993 and 1996 to evaluate the National 4-H Council's Strengthening Our Capacity to Care (SOCC) Project. The development of the OCS was also informed in part by the literature on organizational learning, organizational niche expansion, intra- and inter-organizational relations, and evaluating organizational transitions.

Ultimately, the survey needed to assess six organizational components (derived from research on effective programs for at-risk children, youth, and families) that are key to CYFAR programs:

1. Develop and implement a common vision and strategic plan for programming for children, youth, and families at risk.
2. Train, support, and reward Extension salaried and volunteer staff for implementing programs which accomplish the CYFAR mission.
3. Recognize Extension professionals as critical resources in research and education for children, youth, families, and community issues.
4. Promote diversity, inclusivity, and pluralism in Extension programs and staff.
5. Promote (internal) collaborations of Extension 4-H, Family and Consumer Science, Agriculture, Community Development, and other University departments in programming for children, youth, and families at risk across the state.
6. Promote joint (external) collaborations of community, county, state, and federal agencies and organizations to strengthen programs and policy for children, youth, and families.

To aid in the development of the OCS and to strengthen its validity, a 15-member work group was formed. The members of this group had diverse interests and expertise, and represented USDA-CSREES, the University of Arizona, other land-grant universities including county Extension programs, and the National 4-H Council. After receiving permission to adapt the SOCC survey, the work group members were given a copy of the 1996 SOCC version and six organizational components. The work group members were asked to: (1) categorize the items from the survey under each of the components; (2) determine which questions were essential to each component; and (3) determine gaps in addressing each component.

After a frequency distribution of survey items for each of the six components was calculated, the work group held a face-to-face meeting to come to consensus on the items which best address each component and to discuss survey methods and procedures. A draft of the OCS was then developed and sent out for review to the work group members. Based upon reviewer comments, the survey was revised and piloted with a small sample in Arizona. This copy of the survey, along with supporting documents and survey procedure, was sent to two members of the work group for a final review. After receiving additional feedback via individual interviews with these members, the survey and procedure were sent to CSREES for approval.

The final version of OCS contained 74 items that assessed each state Extension

system's status relative to the six organizational components, utilization of technology, program sustainability, and respondent characteristics. Sample items from the OCS include:

- "Our State Extension system has a strategic plan in place for expanding and strengthening CYFAR programming in our counties."
- "We are provided the resources (time and money) necessary to engage in collaborative efforts to better serve children, youth and families at risk."

A two-part response assessed the current and ideal status for items, using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Two open-ended questions assessed the factors facilitating program sustainability.

Survey Procedure and Response Rates

Evaluation collaboration members at The University of Arizona coordinated the survey process. Materials were sent to each state Extension director, and a contact person in each state was then identified as the individual responsible for implementing the survey. Each state was responsible for selecting participants from among eligible Extension professionals.

Forty-five states or territories implemented OCS from late 1997 to mid-1998. Dillman's (1978) Total Design Method was utilized as a framework for this survey. An introductory letter alerting respondents to the coming survey was mailed one week before the survey itself. A cover letter informing respondents about the purpose of the project and providing directions on returning the completed survey accompanied each questionnaire. All responses, identified only by code numbers, were returned directly to Arizona for analysis. To ensure confidentiality, Arizona did not have a list of respondents and their matching code numbers. Arizona provided the state contact persons with a list of code numbers from returned surveys to facilitate the mailing of reminder letters. One week after the survey was mailed, all eligible respondents were sent a follow-up postcard thanking those who had responded and encouraging others to do so. Two weeks later, a reminder letter was sent to all nonrespondents. Finally, four weeks later, a reminder letter and another copy of the survey packet were sent to all individuals who still had not responded. Response rates ranged from 70% to 99% in 43 of the 45 participating states or territories. The survey procedure also enhanced the validity of the project by minimizing social desirability bias and nonresponse bias.

Data Analysis and Reporting

Initial data entry was performed with the use of a computer software program that allows a standard image scanner to read filled-in bubbles directly from a survey and convert them to numbers for statistical analysis. Each state's data were saved in a separate file. A state-specific report was prepared for each participating state. These data files were then aggregated for analyses for a national report (available at http://ag.arizona.edu/fcr/fs/cyfar/). In the national report, states were the unit of analysis; in other words, each state served as an individual case. The report included tables containing quartile ranges of state percentages, means, and standard deviations for various items, which allowed states to compare their own data to the national trends.

Perhaps the most important result of this survey is the very positive picture of organizational learning that is taking place in Extension across all states ...

Results from the Organizational Change Survey provided valuable information about Cooperative Extension's ability to work with at-risk children, youth, and families. Perhaps the most important result of this survey is the very positive picture of organizational learning that is taking place in Extension across all states; generally, a majority of respondents reported that their state Extension system is successfully implementing the six organizational components. Also, the discrepancies between what is currently happening and what would be ideal for all six organizational components revealed strong support for further expanding and strengthening this system in working with children, youth, and families at risk.

In-depth interviews are currently being conducted with a subsample of randomly selected respondents to gain additional insight into some of the issues raised by the survey responses. For example, while most respondents reported that one of their roles in Extension is to educate policymakers and other community leaders on children, youth, and family issues, they feel they lack knowledge on policy and legislation affecting children, youth, and families at risk. Thus, one interview question examined ways to reduce this gap. Additionally, five evaluation bulletins covering the organizational components (one theme per bulletin) are being published on the Internet (http://ag.arizona.edu/fcr/fs/cyfar/bulletinintro.htm). By presenting questions that can be addressed, lessons learned, and additional resources, these bulletins encourage states to further examine their survey data.

It is important to reiterate that the intent of this survey was to examine the "system" rather than how the "individuals" were doing within the system. Thus, the lessons learned from this process will inform the Extension system as it strives to expand and better support its efforts around at-risk issues. The assumption upon which the survey and report are based is that Extension as a system will better support community-based programs for children, youth, and families at risk when the following conditions exist: personnel have a vision and plan for programming; staff and volunteers are trained, supported, and rewarded appropriately; Extension professionals are viewed as critical resources in research and education; diversity, inclusivity and pluralism are valued; and staff collaborate with their colleagues in Extension and the university, and also with others in the community, county, state, and nation. ◇

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Community-Based Research: Research for Action

Think of a typical "scientist" and what image comes to mind? How about a housewife wearing blue jeans who tests local water quality? Or a group of high school students conducting studies on the health effects of diesel exhaust fumes in their neighborhood? Across the globe, a quiet movement is gathering momentum—one which involves lay citizens in conducting research in response to community-defined needs. "Community-based research"—research that involves laypeople working with professionally trained scientists in a community-driven process—has become a powerful tool for community activists and individual citizens. Through this approach, communities are given a voice in a process that has traditionally been left to professional researchers in universities and federal institutions. Community-based research provides the opportunity for individual citizens to collaborate with professional researchers in defining a problem, conducting the research, interpreting results, and using the results to effect constructive social and environmental change. Community outreach and education are built directly into the research process.

History

Pioneered several decades ago by practitioners who challenged conventional top-down approaches to development, community-based research expanded the traditional research process to make it relevant to real-life problems. In the early 1970s, researchers—primarily in Asia and Latin America—began to question the inability of most research to solve the myriad of problems individuals within these societies were facing. Working with oppressed communities, researchers began to collaborate with community members in designing and implementing research projects that had direct relevance to their struggles.

Since the 1980s, community-based research has become a well-known and widely practiced research methodology as well as a powerful tool for social change in countries around the world. In addition, community-based research practitioners have begun to collaborate through networks in order to improve their work and share resources. The most developed network is in the Netherlands, where the Dutch have pioneered a national network of "science shops." Located at or near each of the nation's 13 universities, the 38 science shops conduct research on questions posed by citizen groups, trade unions, and public interest organizations. Some science shops are general and others are specifically focused on disciplines such as chemistry, biology, and history. Paid staff members and student interns in each shop screen questions and refer challenging problems to university faculty members and students.

> A quiet movement is gathering momentum —one that involves lay citizens in conducting research in response to community-defined needs.

During the formative years of the shops, faculty generally performed the research; however, currently graduate and undergraduate students do much of the work, under faculty supervision. Students receive university credit, often turning their investigations into graduate research. Because students are doing research and writing papers, and the faculty are supervising and evaluating their work, both groups are doing what they would be doing as part of their regular workloads. The difference is that project results are not simply filed away and forgotten. Instead, they help people address important social, environmental, and public health problems that are of concern to their community.

As a result of their work at science shops, some professors have conducted follow-up research projects, published scholarly articles on new topics, developed innovative research methods, forged new interdisciplinary collaborations, and modified courses they teach. Because they are networked with one another, the various Dutch science shops are able to share information and make cross-referrals. Today they respond to about 2,000 annual research requests, and have inspired the creation of additional science shops in Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Germany, Malaysia, Northern Ireland, and Romania.

Community-Based Research in the United States

The Dutch model inspired the Loka Institute—a nonprofit research, education, and advocacy organization located in Amherst, Massachusetts—to bring this concept to the United States and create the Community Research Network (CRN). Modeled partly on the Dutch network, the CRN supports participatory, community-based research efforts worldwide.

In July 1998, Loka conducted a study on the state of community-based research in the United States, and found over 50 community research centers around the country, dealing with a variety of issues—from environmental health to campaign finance. Since the study's release, the number of known research centers in the country has grown to over 100. These research centers are bringing individual citizens from all walks of life into the research process.

For example, in New York City, seven of nine bus depots are located in disadvantaged and underserved communities of

northern Manhattan. Harlem residents raised concern when a new depot was constructed across from a junior high school. Community-based West Harlem Environmental Action (WE ACT) formed a research partnership with researchers at Columbia University and health care providers at Harlem Hospital Center and Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center. As part of this effort, Harlem high school students collected and helped analyze data on diesel exhaust exposure and lung function among a sample of Harlem students. Their study suggests that most adolescents in Harlem are exposed to detectable levels of diesel exhaust, a known accelerator of chronic lung disorders such as asthma. Further studies have now been funded. The participating Harlem high school students coauthored an article published in the peer-reviewed *American Journal of Public Health* (July 1999).

With members of the Community Research Network, the Loka Institute is working to promote such collaboration between university researchers, graduate students, and community members. Our web-based, searchable CRN database (http://www.loka.org/crn/crndb.htm) has information about community-based research centers and researchers around the country. Each year we hold a national conference which provides the opportunity for face-to-face networking, collaboration, and problem-solving between both researchers and community activists. And our collaborative work with various organizations to develop guidelines for community-based research is providing a framework for training scientists and community members in how to effectively use this methodology.

Community-based research provides students and professional researchers with a tremendous opportunity to use their skills to solve real-world problems that communities are facing, and to learn—from community members—how their expertise can be used to effect change. Moreover, community-based research is a skill-building and empowerment tool for individual citizens, thus creating a nationwide community research system that makes empowerment through mutual learning universally accessible. ◇

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For more information about the CRN or the Loka Institute, contact the Institute at P.O. Box 355, Amherst, MA 01004; tel. (413) 559-5860, fax (413) 559-5811, e-mail loka@loka. org, web site http://www.loka.org.

Theory and Practice,
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formation. Objective 2 was also concerned with determining whether that information reached specific target audiences and which information and mechanisms were most effective in reaching the audiences as well as assessing their information needs.

The evaluation objectives made it easier to complete key evaluation planning steps. Once we developed the objectives, we were able to proceed easily through standard evaluation planning procedures. Because the objectives were broad, they could be split out into a series of separate evaluation questions. Those evaluation questions then drove decisions on which methods were needed to answer the questions and therefore address the evaluation objectives.

> The objectives became the essential managing structure for the evaluation.

This approach made it possible in some cases to use methodological approaches with some of the evaluation objectives that would allow us to examine causal links between parts of the Initiative. Because evaluation objectives looked at the links between parts of the model, evaluation questions on causality surfaced. While it was not possible to set up experimental or quasi-experimental designs to assess questions of causality and impacts with the initiative *as a whole*, it was possible to set up such designs to address more specific issues of causality.

In addition to being the organizing structure for the evaluation design, the model and evaluation objectives served later as an effective starting point for further articulating the Initiative's theory of change. Similar to the process of developing the evaluation questions, it was possible to connect short-, intermediate-, and long-term outcomes directly to the evaluation objectives. Because the objectives were the overarching structure for the theory, as the DI evolved, outcomes could be added or modified without affecting the evaluation design's basic structure.

Finally, the objectives became the essential managing structure for the evaluation. Small teams of evaluation staff were set up for each objective. Organizing and managing by objective, as opposed to by methods or outcomes, kept the team focused on what we were learning about the DI's theory rather than what we were learning about its specific outcomes in isolation. Because the methods used crossed team boundaries, this structure also facilitated essential cross-team coordination on data collection and interpretation. ◇

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For more information

About the Devolution Initiative

See the WKKF web site's Devolution page at http://www.wkkf.org/Programming Interests/ Devolution/

About evaluating complex initiatives

Connell, James, Anne Kubisch, Lisbeth Schorr, and Carol Weiss (eds.). (1995). *New approaches to evaluating community initiatives: Concepts, methods, and contexts.* Washington, DC: Aspen Institute.

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The Evaluation Exchange Readers' Survey

HFRP has sought to make *The Evaluation Exchange* an interactive newsletter from its inception. Recently, in order to be able to evolve in response to reader feedback, we invited readers to complete a satisfaction survey. Readers were asked to rate the newsletter based upon four qualities: informative, readable, useful, and thought-provoking. We also asked them to identify which sections of the newsletter they found most and least useful. Finally, we gave readers an opportunity to offer specific comments on *The Evaluation Exchange* and to suggest changes in the format or the types of issues addressed. While we were pleased to discover that the majority of respondents were satisfied with the newsletter—praising it as "relevant," "useful," and "readable"—we also appreciated the constructive criticism that we received. Of particular interest to us were issues and methods readers identified as worthy of more attention. These are briefly discussed below, along with the immediate steps HFRP is taking to better tailor *The Evaluation Exchange* to the needs of our readership.

Response to the survey also helped to reveal the diversity of our readership, which represents a variety of national, state, and local agencies and institutions, both public and private. Answers showed that readers turn to *The Evaluation Exchange* for help in addressing a broad range of needs and concerns. Still, reader comments tended to correspond to three major areas of interest: (1) interest in evaluation methodology, including specific evaluative practices; (2) interest in particular demographic populations or policy issues; and (3) interest in broader organizational or professional resource development issues. Many comments and concerns also involved intersections of the three areas.

Area 1: Interest in evaluation methodology, including specific evaluation practices. Five subcategories of interest were isolated in this area: (1) how to start evaluations from scratch or with limited resources; (2) how to conduct multi-agency/cross-site evaluation; (3) how to demonstrate community impact; (4) how to use targeted populations in evaluation practice; and (5) how to employ specific evaluative methods. In response to these concerns, HFRP will be featuring several items of interest in future issues of *The Evaluation Exchange*. First, in the current issue on methodology, we respond to several methods concerns including the use of logic models, cost-benefit analysis, and evaluating collaborative endeavors. We will continue to include topics on specific evaluation methods in future issues. Second, in our next issue, we will be unveiling an "Ask the Expert" section in which a featured evaluator will respond to your "on the ground" evaluation questions. Third, in our most recent issue on youth development and in upcoming issues focused on areas such as out-of-school time, we discuss topics like how to incorporate youth voices in evaluation.

Area 2: Interest in specific demographic populations or policy issues. Evaluation of programs directed at children and youth was most commonly cited as an area of interest by readers. In response to your needs, our most recent edition focused on youth development. Our next edition will focus on children and youth in the out-of-school hours. Other populations and issues of concern, including family support services and welfare reform, will also be targeted in upcoming editions of *The Evaluation Exchange*. Many readers were also concerned more generally about the connections between evaluation and policymaking. This is a subject of particular interest to HFRP. In this issue of the newsletter, our discussion with Michael Scriven touches on this subject; future editions will further explore these connections in conversations with and articles by both evaluators and policymakers.

Area 3: Interest in broader organizational or professional resource development. *Evaluation Exchange* readers identified several subcategories of interest under this area: (1) professional resource development; (2) small agency development; (3) learning how to educate others about the importance of evaluation; and (4) funding practices for evaluation. *The Evaluation Exchange* will continue to strive to keep its readers updated about the latest literature and developments in the evaluation field. In addition, future issues, including the forthcoming edition on out-of-school time, will address capacity-building in small agencies and funding strategies for evaluation. We will also be producing a future edition devoted to strategic communication issues that will help to address the links between evaluation and communication. Finally, look for upcoming work on adult learning theory and how it can inform evaluation and communication strategy.

HFRP looks forward to better meeting your needs as readers, and to continuing to receive your responses to our efforts. We would like to thank all of our readers who took the time to complete surveys and remind you that we are always interested in hearing from you. ◇

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From the Director's Desk,
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work of her organization, the Loka Institute. Finally, in our Spotlight section, Danielle Hollar of HFRP writes about the possibility of using an approach that provides a more comprehensive picture of the quality of people's lives to examine the impact of welfare reform on individuals. As always, our New and Noteworthy section and our Electronic Mailbox provide information on useful evaluation resources.

We hope you will continue to provide us with feedback about how *The Evaluation Exchange* can be most useful to you. You may use the online survey form which is still posted on the *Evaluation Exchange* page of HFRP's web site, or e-mail comments to us at any time. (For our web site and e-mail addresses, see HFRP contact information in the copyright box on page 1.) Thank you. ◇

Quality of Life: A Framework for Examining the Impact of Welfare Reform

"What we don't know is precisely what is happening to all of these former welfare recipients."[1]

This sentiment of concern, expressed by Health and Human Services Secretary Donna E. Shalala, echoes throughout public policy research and practitioner circles, federal and state legislatures, state and local welfare reform institutions, internet listserves, community-based service organizations, and in general, throughout the polity at large. And while research on "welfare leavers" is emerging,[2] much of this research tends to focus on traditional measures, on numbers geared toward answering questions such as how many people are leaving the rolls, how many people have or do not have jobs, what wages people leaving welfare are earning, and so forth. Thus, we are beginning to collect counts, but we do not have the *story*. We do not know many details about former welfare recipients, what they are doing, how they are faring. Are they working? Are they moving into jobs and self-sufficiency? And more importantly, what are their lives really like after leaving public assistance? Of particular interest is a holistic conception of their "quality of life after welfare reform."

From a public interest perspective, evaluators of social programs, public administrators, and policymakers are charged with understanding the magnitude and direction of the impact of welfare reform on beneficiaries of our public assistance institutions. But how do we go about assessing the impact of policy in ways that really describe what is happening to people as new policies are implemented? Assessing the human impact of policy changes requires more than the evaluation of economic outcomes. Judging the true issues of well-being requires that we know about the resources of beneficiaries and their conditions of life from various perspectives. Characteristics of people's lives that create the whole person—aspects such as health, knowledge and skills, social relations, conditions of work, and so forth[4]—need to be examined in relationship with each other in order to determine true policy impact.

One possible framework from which to craft evaluation activities that address these issues is quality of life. A *quality of life* framework takes into consideration all of the aspects of life that collectively affect well-being, including components such as those found in Box 3.

Evaluators may use these components of a quality of life framework to guide the selection of methodologies generally, and/or more specifically, in the construction of indicators and measures for assessing impact. In selecting methodologies for collecting and analyzing data, evaluators should seek methods that allow the collection and analysis of data in each of the component areas of quality of life, as

BOX 3 Domains and Examples of Measures of Quality of Life[3]

Components	*Measures*
Health and Access to Health Care	• Contact with health professionals • Symptoms of illness • Availability/use of health insurance
Employment and Working Conditions	• Opportunity to leave during work hours • Type of occupation
Economic Resources	• Income/earnings • Expenses (child care, transportation, health)
Education	• Level of education reached • School attendance/performance
Housing	• Number of persons per room • Type of housing/amenities
Security of Life and Property	• Exposure to violence and theft • Safe/functional housing
Diet and Nutrition	• Quantity of food available • Resources for food acquisition

1 Vobejda, B. (Feb. 7, 1998). Spending per recipient has risen since enactment of welfare reform. *Washington Post*, p. A2.

2 For a comprehensive list of research focusing on those leaving welfare, see the Welfare Information Network web site (http://www.welfareinfo.org) and the Research Forum web site (http://www.researchforum.org/).

3 This framework is based primarily on the work of economists and philosophers found in Martha C. Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (eds.), *The quality of life*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc.

4 Erikson, R. (1993). Descriptions of inequality: The Swedish approach to welfare research. In Nussbaum and Sen (eds.), cited above.

well as across these domains. Most often, doing so requires the use of multiple methods, but by choosing data collection and analysis methods based on this framework, all aspects of well-being will be considered. A quality of life framework also assists in the development of data gathering plans and instruments specifically. Following this framework ensures that questions are asked that address holistic conceptions of life, or that preexisting administrative data are identified and used that address the components of the framework, and thus the critical aspects of the lives of those affected by policy change. However, evaluators need to be cognizant of the fact that most administrative datasets do not include information on all aspects of quality of life mentioned above, and thus other means of data collection will have to be used to fully understand the stories of those leaving welfare.

In conclusion, I hope that this brief discussion of a quality of life framework for guiding evaluation activities has ignited your interest in pursuing holistic perspectives for the evaluation of social policies and programs. Crafting evaluation activities around indicators and measures of quality of life will provide greater, qualitative insight for guiding the creation and modification of public policies, especially those that affect low-income populations, by revealing the nuances of the lives of those affected by social policy change. From such a framework, evaluators, public administrators, and policymakers working on social policy issues can examine impact and determine how best to direct, or redirect, policy processes that serve low-income populations. ◆

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For information on submitting articles to *The Evaluation Exchange*, please call (617) 495-9108 or visit our web site: http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~hfrp/eval

ELECTRONIC MAILBOX

American Statistical Association, Survey Research Methods Section
http://www.stat.ncsu.edu/info/srms/srms.html

The mission of the ASA's Section on Survey Research Methods is to promote the improvement of survey practice and the understanding of survey methods by encouraging both theoretical and applied research on survey-related topics and by disseminating information on survey methods. The web site offers information and hints about surveys, focus groups, mail surveys, and other aspects of survey research.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Evaluation Working Group
http://www.cdc.gov/eval/index.htm

This web site highlights the work of the CDC Evaluation Working Group and its efforts to promote program evaluation in public health. The site also provides information about resources to support evaluation, including CDC's framework for program evaluation.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation and University of Maryland, Department of Measurement, Statistics, and Evaluation: Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation (PARE)
http://www.ericae.net/pare

An online journal which provides access to refereed articles that can have a positive impact on assessment, research, evaluation, and teaching practice, especially at the local education agency level. Currently online are six volumes of the journal, containing about 70 articles designed to help members of the community keep up-to-date with effective methods, trends, and research developments. ◆

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Research Associate
HFRP

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NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

We regret that we cannot provide copies of the materials listed below. Please contact the publisher or authoring organization directly.

The Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF), United States Department of Health and Human Services. (Nd). ***The program manager's guide to evaluation.*** This guide explains the program evaluation process and provides background information on how to use it successfully. Chapters answer questions such as the following: Why evaluate? What is program evaluation? Who should conduct your evaluation? How do you hire and manage an outside evaluator? How do you prepare for an evaluation? What should you include in an evaluation? How do you get the information you need? How do you make sense of evaluation information? How can you report what you have learned? Companion handbooks address evaluation issues specific to the different ACYF program areas.
http://www2.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/hsb/CORE/dox/progman.html

Bernard, H. Russell et al. (eds.) (1999). *Field methods.* **Thousand Oaks, CA: AltaMira Press (a division of Sage Publications).** Formerly CAM, the *Cultural Anthropology Methods* journal, this is a new peer-reviewed journal whose editors include an international, interdisciplinary editorial board of scholars. The journal is published quarterly. Articles focus on the methods used by field workers in the social and behavioral sciences and humanities for the collection, management, and analysis of data about human thought and/or human behavior in the natural world. The emphasis is on innovations and issues related to methods used, rather than the reporting of research or theoretical-epistemological questions about research. For information about submitting an article reviewing a book or piece of software, contact the editor at ufruss@nersp.nerdc.ufl.edu. To obtain subscription information, e-mail the publisher at order@altamira.sagepub. com.

Bond, Sally L., Sally E. Boyd, and Kathleen A. Rapp. (1997) ***Taking stock: A practical guide to evaluating your own programs.*** **Chapel Hill, NC: Horizon Research, Inc.** Produced at the request of the American Association for the Advancement of Science for its Science Linkages in the Community Initiative, this manual is a useful guide to program evaluation for community-based organizations. Focusing on internal evaluation, the manual describes the evaluation process from beginning to end. Chapters address issues such as why evaluation is necessary, identifying goals and objectives, qualitative and quantitative data, data collection strategies, and interpreting and using data. This guide includes examples using fictional CBOs; appendices include sample reports using evaluation data.

Frechtling, Joy and Laure Sharp Westat (eds.). (August 1997). ***User-friendly handbook for mixed method evaluations.*** **Washington, DC: Directorate for Education and Human Resources, Division of Research, Evaluation and Communication, National Science Foundation.** Chapters in this publication provide an introduction to mixed method evaluations, an overview of qualitative methods and analytic techniques, and approaches for designing and reporting mixed method evaluations. Also included are supplementary materials and exhibits that highlight the concepts discussed in the handbook.
http://www.ehr.nsf.gov/EHR/REC/pubs/NSF97-153/start.htm

Patton, Michael Quinn. (1997). ***Utilization-focused evaluation: The new century text.*** **Third Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.** The latest edition of this important work, which won both the Alva and Gunner Myrdal Award from the Evaluation Research Society and the Paul F. Lazarsfeld Award from the American Evaluation Association, includes numerous new thought-provoking topics for consideration. Added topics include using participatory evaluation processes to change a program's culture and build a learning organization; alternative evaluator roles connected to varying situations and diverse evaluation purposes; getting started: generating commitment to use; how evaluators can nurture results-oriented, reality-testing leadership in programs and organizations; and specific techniques for managing the power dynamics of working with primary intended users as well as evaluation stakeholders. New pedagogical features include more than 50 new exhibits for teaching and training use, and menus developed as special tools for working with stakeholders in selecting evaluation decision options. $42.00 paperback. Sage Publications, Inc., 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320. Tel: (805) 499-0721. Fax: (805) 499-0871.
http://www. sagepub. com

Rossi, Peter H., Howard E. Freeman, and Mark W. Lipsey. (1999). ***Evaluation: A systematic approach. Sixth Edition.*** **Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.** Long considered a benchmark publication in evaluation, this book has been completely revised to include the latest techniques and approaches to evaluation as well as guidelines for how evaluations should be tailored to fit programs and social contexts. The new edition includes content on assessing program theory—illustrating procedures that evaluators use to tease out theory when it is implicit in a program, and information on approaches to assessing the quality of program design and conceptualization. Another new chapter offers practical approaches to fashioning effective evaluation questions, guidelines for selecting an evaluation type, and tips for deciding what focus an evaluation should have. $59.95 hardcover. Sage Publications, Inc., 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320. Tel: (805) 499-0721. Fax: (805) 499-0871.
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